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Abstracts from the Report on the

MENNONITE WORLD RELIEF CONFERENCE

August 31 to September 3, 1930

in

Danzig

which was published by

Christian Neff

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Translated by

Paul Schmidt

Edited by

Delbert L. Gratz

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PREFACE

The following discourses were given at the Mennonite World Relief Conference (Mennonitische Welt-Hilfs-Konferenz) that was held at Danzig from August 31 to September 3, 1930. The proceedings of this conference were assembled by Dr. Christian Neff under the title Bericht über die Mennonitische Welt-Hilfs-Konferenz vom 31. August bis 3. September 1930 in Danzig. This was printed in booklet form at Karlsruhe, Germany.

The items that appear most significant for a better understanding of the present Mennonite world relief program were selected by John E. Bender from the above named printed booklet and all but two of the items were translated by Paul Schmidt. The translation was checked by Dr. Robert Friedmann, Kalamazoo, Michigan. The article by W. J. Kühler and the one by C. F. Klassen are copied from the Mennonite Quarterly Review by permission of H. S. Bender, editor.

It should be remembered that this is not a professional translation. The authors of these papers are responsible for only the items as they appeared in the German language, not as they appear here in English.

It is hoped that this small brochure may help the present day Mennonite relief worker, as well as anyone interested in Mennonite relief work, to better understand the background and precedence of our present day American Mennonite war sufferers relief program.

Akron, Pennsylvania
September 1, 1946

Delbert L. Gratz

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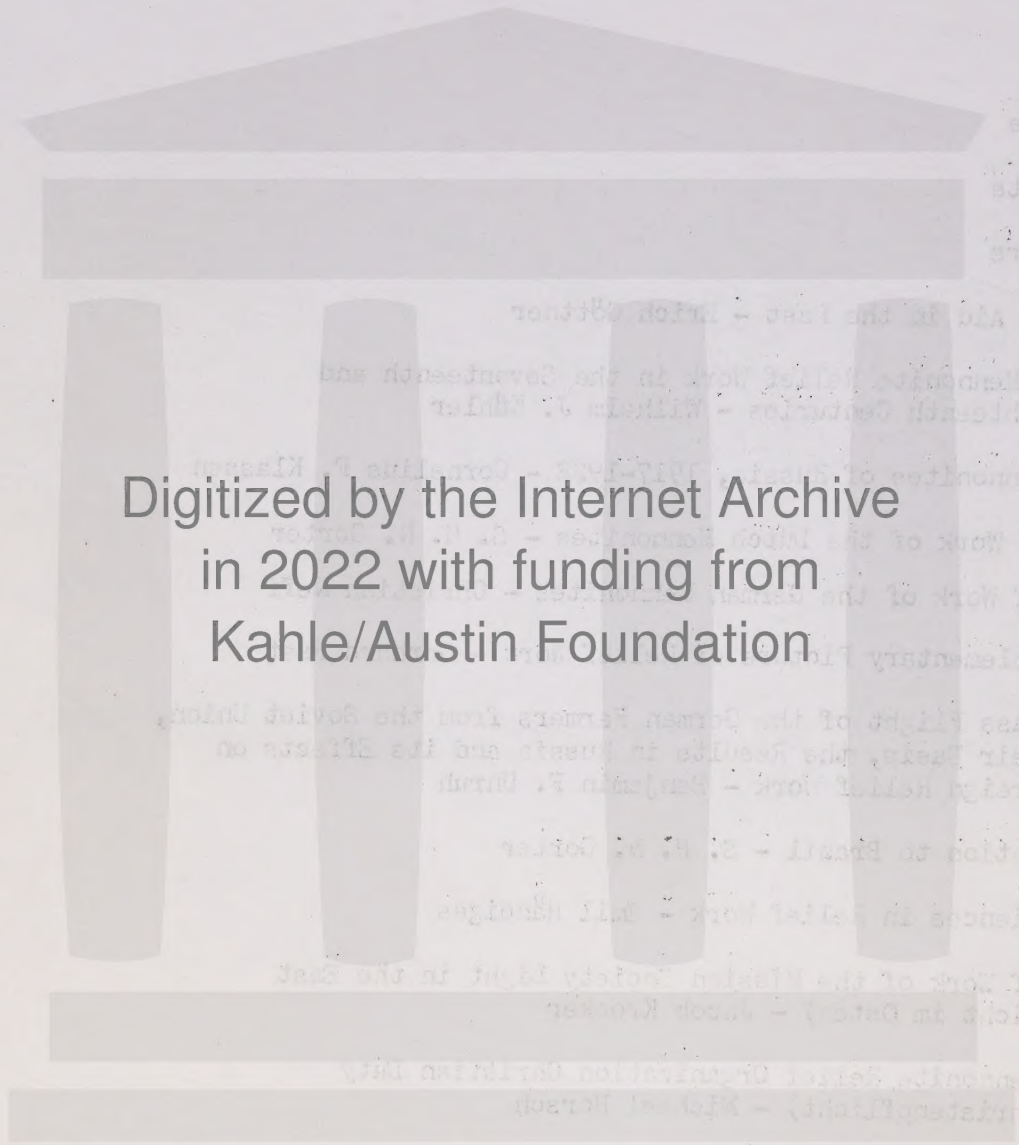

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SPEAKERS

Erich Göttner. Pastor of the Danzig Mennonite Church until 1945. He was in an anti-aircraft detachment in the Danzig area when last heard of. It has been more than a year since the Russians invaded that area and no word concerning him has been received since. His wife now lives in Bavaria.

Wilhelm J. Kühler. Professor at the Mennonite Theological Seminary and the University of Amsterdam at Amsterdam, Holland, from 1912 until he retired recently. He was editor of Doopsgezinde Bijdragen and has published a number of books on the Mennonites in Holland.

Cornelius F. Klassen. Collector, Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. Sec.-Treas. of Mennonite Central Relief Committee. At present helping organize the migration of refugee Mennonites from Germany and Holland to Canada and Paraguay.

S. H. N. Gorter was for more than 25 years pastor of the Mennonite Church of Rotterdam. Recently he accepted a call of the smaller Mennonite church at Zeist since he has become the editor of Doopsgezinde Bijdragen the official organ of the Dutch Mennonites. Between the two world wars he was active in the relief work of the Dutch Migration Bureau (Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau) to the Mennonites from Russia.

Christian Neff is a Mennonite leader, author, and historian from Weierhof, Germany. With Christian Hege he compiled the Mennotisches Lexikon up to the letter 'M'. Although quite advanced in age he is carrying on with this work with the assistance of Eberhard Teufel since the death of Hege.

Gerhard Fast. Former pastor at Eichwalde, Germany. Died in 1935 or 1936.

Benjamin H. Unruh was, between the two World Wars, the authorized authority in matters pertaining to the relief and rehabilitation work done among the Mennonites in Russia, Paraguay and other countries. His headquarters are located in Durlach near Karlsruhe. He is still devoting his time to helping unfortunate Mennonites of the late war as much as circumstances permit.

Emil Händiges, former pastor of the large Elbing-Ellerwald Mennonite Congregation in Prussia and chairman of the General Conference of the Mennonite Churches in Germany (Vereinigung der Mennonitengemeinden im Deutschen Reich), is now pastor of the Mennonite church at Monsheim, Rheinhessen, a small town in the Pfalz near Worms.

Jacob Kroeker has served as director of Light in the East (Licht im Osten) since World War I preparing ministers for Russia. He has lectured and written especially on the Old Testament prophets. He is still living in Wernigerode am Harz but intends to move with his wife to the home of their son in Sweden.

Michael Horsch. Elder, from Hellmannsberg bei Kushing, Ingolstadt, Bavaria. Chairman of Christian Duty (Christenpflicht), the Bavarian Mennonite relief committee. At present he is concerned with aiding the Russian Mennonites now in Bavaria. He is a brother of the late John Horsch, Mennonite historian.

MUTUAL AID IN THE PAST
by Erich Göttner

During our World Conference in Basel five years ago (1925) I was delegated to prepare another meeting of that kind. All sorts of difficulties presented themselves. Now the event has arrived. It bears another name - World Relief Conference. It has a different purpose. I would like to quote as its foundation the scripture verse: "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

But now endures the faith in all afflictions of the world - the faith in God our father in heaven, who revealed himself in Christ Jesus, the crucified and arisen Lord; now endures hope in all the difficulties of life--the hope of the eternal world; and now endures love in all the afflictions of the times--the love which is the greatest of these.

"Mutual Aid" is the great theme of our Second World Conference. An alarming, worldshaking event brought the opportunity--the shocking plight of our brethren in Russia. The eyes of the world were directed at them as the historical escape occurred October 1929. Thirteen thousand farmers of German descent left their beloved rich community and home and placed themselves in terrible peril to escape an even more terrible danger. By far most of them were Mennonites. All at once the name Mennonite became world-known.

When 5,700 of these refugees came across the German borders, the hearts and hands of the German people opened and an unprecedented relief work began. Nearly a million reichs mark were received by the central office of the German Red Cross. And what a supply of clothes was gathered!

It is unmatched in the story of our denomination that help from foreign sources fell our way. We were only accustomed to receiving help from our own brethren. When in 1671 around 700 Mennonites, driven from Switzerland, came to the Palatinate, no hand or heart stirred to help them except our own brotherhood. Our brotherhood did not refuse--they could not refuse. It was a self-understood duty. They belonged in essence to a Christian community that wished to carry out practical Christianity. This brotherhood has a strong biblical basis for mutual aid in the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10)

I don't intend to bring up many Bible references in which the gospel is so rich. It is, however, unique how Paul in the 8th and 9th chapters of the second letter to the Corinthians laid upon the hearts of the church of Corinth to help the brethren; how he pointed to the poor Macedonian church which had placed itself under his influence to help the needy church in Jerusalem; and how such aid to our brethren brings great blessings. However everything--the giving and receiving--is merely the grace of God. It all contributes to the glory of God and, therefore, the thanks belong only to God. May these two chapters of the Holy Scriptures serve our churches as a model for a living emulation.

But let us take a short glance of the history of our churches which must always strengthen us for the tasks today and tomorrow. When I study the old documents in which the official authorities were concerned with Mennonites, I am always happily impressed to read a special stress and emphasis. The Mennonites have no poor; beggars are not found among them. They help each other in brotherly love. That is their trait--a characteristic of her congregation.

A fine reputation! It is the model of the apostolic church which the baptized souls sought to realize. In the community of goods of the Hutterian Brethren one finds this striving at its highest peculiar expression. The Hutterian Brethren

is the only group in which the scriptural communism of love is transposed into fact, and for a time brought to a higher flowering. Even where one did not agree with them, did not accept, nor approve of their communism (and that was the larger majority of the Mennonite Church) they had, however, the idea of mutual aid as a demand regarding the stewardship of property.

"I am not in favor of common ownership", said Blaurock in a hearing. "But we who want to be a good Christian must distribute his property, or he is not one." Similarly Felix Manz expressed himself. Menno Simons knew the accusation that his church had community of goods and he denounced it, but he said of his brethren: "They show compassion and love to each other as members of a Christian Church to the best of their ability. They allow no beggars among them. They take under their care the holy pressing needs. They loan to the needy. They clothe the naked. They break bread for the hungry."

The confessions of faith, in conformance, also emphasize the duty of brotherly love. In the famous confession of faith in the Martyr's Mirror, to mention only one of the many confessions, one reads: "Those whom God has provided with earthly possessions serve therewith their neighbor in earthly need." And of the three deacons to the poor it is said: "To these shall the voluntary givers deliver their gifts," in order that they may supply the needs of the poor co-members of Christ (who worked industriously with their hands according to their ability but nevertheless could not support themselves) so that no beggar or pressing need could be found under God's folk. This was in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that the gifts would be secret to everyone but revealed unto God."

As far as I can see, it was held this way in our brotherhood. I know of no instance where an actual member of our church openly fell under the charity or care of the State. Where the resources of a single congregation did not suffice to aid those presently in need, the combined relief began in the same manner as it was organized for the different countries in the Relief and Aid Societies. As examples I think of the Palatinate-Hessian "Mennonite Relief Chest", The Baden Aid Society, The West Prussian Society, etc.

But where this was not sufficient, where our churches had to suffer great catastrophes, or where particularly heavy needs were found, the appeal to the brotherly aid of their co-religionists was never in vain. The South German and also particularly the Swiss Mennonites have experienced this to a certain degree through the Holland brotherhood. Prof. Kühler will relate that to us.(See Pg.

When in the year 1855 on the 27th and 28th of March as a result of a strong ice drifts on the Vistula nearly fifty dikes broke, the water rushed down over the Vistula plains and did fearful damage. Love gifts came together out of all the German Churches, particularly from the South German congregations, but also from Poland and Russia, to stem the need of the West Prussian brethren. And never will I forget what a deep, grateful impression it made upon me when my home congregation, Ludwigshafen-Friesenheim, experienced so spontaneously the brotherly love at the time of the bursting of a dike. We received more than we needed and shared in the distribution of the received gifts of love with other sufferers. There we experienced something of the truth of the words of Jesus: "It is better to give than to receive."

So it was after the World War as the dreadful inflation came upon us. The love gifts from America swamped us and we were allowed to distribute them throughout our church while the Dutch Brethren took the under-nourished children of Germany under their care.

The charity of the Mennonites reached not only their co-religionists, but it steadily reached out across those borders. That is true today as it was in the past. Few charitable institutions or organizations of evangelical protestant churches exist in which the Mennonites do not share in a distinguished way--be it

the Gustav Adolph Society, The Wichernsche Institution or the one of Pastor Von Boderlschwingh. It is not unusual that larger gifts are given them than to our own church organizations.

As the previously mentioned flood of American love gifts came to us, there were larger gifts included with special instructions to be given to protestant charitable institutions with which we were not even acquainted, and our own charitable institutions went empty handed. These are experiences that move painfully. Of course I would not like to miss this fine trait of general charity in our church. I would not like to limit it in any way as long as we do not forget those "who are of the household of faith". I expect a great deal from our World Relief Conference. May there go out from here a refreshment, a new stimulation to mutual aid that will be a praise and a blessing to our hard-pressed Russian Brethren and our whole church. May God grant it!

DUTCH MENNONITE RELIEF WORK IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES*

by Wilhelm J. Kühler

We have not met for the purpose of a scholarly or learned conference. If I therefore am to have the honor of speaking to you about the relief which Dutch Mennonites of former centuries have bestowed on oppressed fellow believers in foreign countries, then you probably expect me to give a detailed account of this comprehensive subject. If I, however, pick out a few items it will suffice to make vivid to you what joy for sacrifice our forefathers showed, what blessing attended their work--but also how great at times their disappointment was.

Let me begin by taking you back to the year 1664. At that time the Flemish Mennonite Church in Amsterdam was experiencing anxious days. It was torn by inner dissensions, which finally resulted in division. The serious aspect of this was that the dissension involved doctrine and therefore in reality was a contention centering about the basic principle of Mennonite doctrine--freedom of conscience. The orthodox elements put the emphasis on the various dogmas, like the Trinity and the Reconciliation through Christ; the more liberal-minded did not want to hear of any rigid confession and considered denominational differences of small consequence. From 1664 on both parties existed as separate churches. It seemed that the brotherly bond had been torn forever.

Six years later, however, something happened which united those factions again, at least in one aspect. This occurred in the fateful year of 1672 when the Dutch Republic was on the verge of collapse because of a difficult war with France, England, Münster, and Cologne. During this time dispatches from Switzerland revealed that the Anabaptists there had been persecuted and driven out in a shocking manner. Immediately the Dutch brethren forgot their differences. Conservatives and liberals united to gather money to alleviate the need of the oppressed.

This incident has a twofold moral. The disagreeing Mennonites now clearly revealed that in their religious life they recognized something that was more important than orthodoxy and that Christian love could unite what incompatibility had separated. We of the Twentieth Century, however, can draw still another moral. We all know that we brethren, coming as we do from different countries and continents, can not agree in our confession. This need not worry us, for it is a necessary resultant of our basic principle of individual spiritual freedom. We know also that brotherly feeling need not suffer harm because of this and that we like our forefathers may unite in works of Christian love. In our time too, sad to say, religious persecution still rages; it rages in a country to whose boundaries we are now very close and where oppressed fellow believers cry out for our assistance.

The Swiss Mennonite aid of 1672 was not the only instance of relief work by our forefathers. Several more such occasions arose; ever greater sacrifices became necessary. In the process the Mennonites showed such a broad conception of their duty that they also supported the Reformed Church although this same church frequently persecuted them in their own country.

When Louis XIV recalled the Edict of Nantes and the Huguenots were subjected to the worst persecution, the Dutch Mennonites, especially, revealed unlimited activity for charity. It is important to note that the government of Amsterdam at that time depended on the generosity of Mennonite merchants and that almost half of the relief receipts at Haarlem were received from Mennonites.

The Mennonites naturally gave their own church members the greatest attention. It is common knowledge that in 1690 the French armies desolated the Palatinate. Of the 400 Mennonite families that lived there more than half (240) were robbed of

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* This article appeared in the Mennonite Quarterly Review, April 1943. It is reproduced here by special permission of H.S. Bender, editor. It was translated from the German by Jacob Sudermann, Assistant Professor of German at Goshen College.

their possessions. Leaving their ruined dwellings behind them, they sought refuge on some of the islands of the Rhine. There they dwelt in make-shift huts built of branches and suffered from lack of everything. Luckily help came from Holland. Again Mennonites of different branches united to solicit aid from their membership. While the money was sent to Frankfurt to be paid out to the leaders of the Palatinate churches, ships with grain and clothes sailed up the Rhine. In this crisis of 1690 the Dutch brethren contributed 30,000 guilders. This sum was almost doubled in the following years. Many Palatinate refugees found a haven in the seven Dutch provinces; in Amsterdam alone one hundred forty of these arrived and were provided with all the necessities of life.

In the long run, however, it proved necessary to have a permanent treasury in order to administer the relief program effectively. For this purpose the well-known Foundation for Foreign Relief was organized in Amsterdam in 1710, which for almost one hundred years did a work richly blessed. There were, of course, various difficulties to overcome, especially those with the church at Rotterdam, before the Foundation could some into existence, but in the end brotherly feeling surmounted all obstacles.

I mentioned before that I could not give a complete history of my subject. It would tire you to listen to it. The stories are always the same stories of distress and oppression for which the Dutch Mennonite aid brought relief. In order, however, to give you an insight into the activity of the Foundation, I wish to cite three examples: the first of a successful aid project, the second of a necessary refusal of requested aid, the third of a complete failure in rendering aid.

In the year 1709 persecution in Switzerland raged worse than ever. The detention houses of Bern were overflowing with unfortunates; the inhuman treatment to which these people were exposed caused many to become sick and die. Day after day the rest lived in fear that the minority in the city council, which demanded their execution, might finally become the majority. However, because of the intercession of the Dutch government, for whose help our forefathers did not ask in vain, a solution of the problem was found. The council of Bern finally decided to send the captives to Rotterdam under a heavy military escort, so that they might be shipped from there to Pennsylvania in an English ship. On March 18, 1710, the exiled Mennonites left Bern; on the 28th they arrived at Mannheim with their transport. Here the military escort had to leave behind a few old and sick people; the rest arrived at Nijmwegen on April 6. Here, however, their suffering ended. One of the captives, accompanied by two soldiers, was permitted to visit the Dutch Mennonite Laurens Hendrik. Immediately this man appealed to the city magistrate, who without delay set all the unfortunate ones free. The Swiss could, of course, use no force on foreign soil; they had to release their captives and depart without having completed their task. The condition of the exiles was pitiable. They had spent twenty days in the confining quarters of the ship. Luckily they were inured to hardship. Their outward appearance caused surprise. They had long beards which had never been cut; they wore unusual clothes and heavy shoes which were shod with iron and studded with great nails.

Later five more shiploads followed, so that the number of exiles increased to about 450. What was one to do with all these strangers here in the Netherlands? The States guaranteed their freedom, of course, but the necessities of life had to be provided by the Dutch Mennonites. A sum of 50,000 guilders was collected. The smaller church communities, also faithfully collected for the unfortunate ones. Thus I found chronicled that in the southwest corner of Frisia a general collection was held for the exiled Swiss brethren as part of the communion service. In Hindeloopen the collection amounted to 228 guilders, in Workum 73, in Warns 80, in Stavoren 26, in Kondum and Molkwerum 20 guilders.

The problem now was, where to settle the newcomers. In Holland the opinion was to settle them in Frisia. The Frisian Society, however, was emphatically

against this. Because of the activity of three men, whose names we can mention with reverence: Steven Craver, Dirk Alles and Alle Dirk, it was agreed to settle the exiles at Groningen, Sappemeer, Bakkeween, Goredijk, Surhuistereen, and Kampen. In several of these places the Swiss established church communities and distinguished themselves by their cheerful and earnest piety. Later, a number of members moved to the Palatinate while others sought a new home in Pennsylvania. The remainder gradually assimilated themselves with the Netherland brethren. Today there are no longer any distinguishable signs of these Swiss. This work of love, however, had performed its usefulness; the brotherhood was able to look back on a successful demonstration of relief work.

I just said that some of the Mennonites went to Pennsylvania. They were enticed to go there by English agents who wished to have energetic colonists for their American property. They were given the most appealing promises; the most glorious future was pictured to them. All this not only attracted the exiles who had found a peaceful home here but it also attracted those unfortunate ones who still sighed under the burden of persecution in the Palatinate. The English had a practical way to do business. They advised the Palatinate brethren to go to Rotterdam. There they were to find ships; the rich Dutch were to pay the transportation and provide them with good equipment.

We are not surprised that the Commission for Foreign Relief* had serious objections to this beautiful plan. It knew how much the exaggeration of the English was to blame; it knew that the emigrants would run great risk of being captured and sold as slaves because of the war between England and Spain. For this reason the Commission advised emphatically against the plan but to no avail. As the only answer to its fears the Commission received on March 20, 1717, the news that about 100 emigrants were on the way to Rotterdam. Three months later Rotterdam recorded that three hundred foreigners had arrived while others were preparing to follow. Although the Commission specifically declared that it was not supporting the project, it at the same time decided secretly to aid the emigrants as much as possible. It could not draw from its own treasury, of course; the necessary funds came from private sources.

This was a weakness which bore its own penalty. When Hubert Brouwer and his family received three hundred guilders for traveling expenses it was no longer possible to hold back the flood of emigrants. In great numbers they came from the Palatinate. They simply had to be helped when they arrived in Rotterdam. The Commission wrote to Pennsylvania and to the church at home to discourage this emigration from the pulpits. Naturally, these warnings had no result in Europe. Finally, when more than three thousand foreigners had arrived in Rotterdam, the Commission decided, on June 11, 1732, to give the Palatinate emigres only enough money to return to their own fatherland. This rule, strictly applied, permanently ended further emigration. A year later the Commission reports that it was no longer troubled by requests for passage money to North America. That was, as far as I know, the only case where aid was definitely denied.

Now I shall mention an example of failure in relief work. We turn for this to Lithuania. Everyone knows that King Frederick William I, who was crowned in 1718, took special pleasure in tall soldiers. This prince, to be sure, had granted the Mennonites freedom from military service, but his recruiting officers did not concern themselves about this in the least. Whoever, because of his stature, seemed useful to the service, whether he was Mennonite or not, was dragged off. Thus it happened that one night sixteen young people were routed from their beds to serve the king. Many pleas followed until it was too much for the hot-tempered prince to endure. In 1724 he forbade anyone to remain longer in his country who refused his service. An emigration movement of Mennonites to Tannenberg alleviated the situation for only a short time--from here they were also driven in 1732.

(* The term "Commission" is used from this point on, in order better to translate the idea of an active agency).

They decided to retreat to Holland, at that time the classical land of freedom. After a long and stormy sea voyage of three months one hundred ten refugees arrived in the same year at Amsterdam.

The Commission for Foreign Relief took hold of the difficult task with joyous fervor. It decided to found a colony for the emigrants at Wageningen in Gelderland. By means of large sums farmland was purchased at this place and houses were built. Supplied with all necessities--for the collections had attained to 65,000 guilders--the foreigners were able to settle comfortably in Wageningen and to begin a new life.

Sad to say, the well-meant effort failed pitifully. Several causes can be cited, but, if one asks for the basic reason, it seems to me, the following must be mentioned. The Lithuanians at this time were still very backward and consequently did not feel at home in highly cultured Holland. They had their own conceptions and could not adjust themselves to the practices of their new fatherland. They were in no respect bad people, even if one could blame their conduct in many ways. Since they, however, had received such special attention, they cradled themselves in the naive belief that they could have anything for the asking and that they could insist on so-called rights. Perhaps the Netherlands brethren were not quite guiltless. In the beginning they were very proud of the colony and had spoiled the colonists. The rich Amsterdam merchants visited the farms, conversed in a friendly way with the colonists, and gave them advice and presents. They, for instance, sent them tea, which came on their ships from India and was at that time an expensive luxury. No wonder that the Lithuanians began to look upon themselves as gentlemen and ladies in this rich Holland.

Very soon there were complaints that the women's dresses were too costly and that the men were lazy. Love of pomp and idleness, however, had never been a shortcoming. One could tell all sorts of stories, partly sad and partly humorous, showing what a peculiar spirit developed among these colonists. One case will suffice. Early one morning one of the brethren felt more like driving to Arnhem than to work. On his own responsibility he took a horse belonging to the colony, but just after he had harnessed it to the wagon and thought to drive off, a neighbor stopped him and explained he had need of the horse for his plow. There were angry words and it almost came to blows. The Commission was much wrought up over this incident. "Did you people emigrate to this place because of the principle of nonresistance?" was its reprimand; "Was this to be expected of pious souls who preferred to suffer all rather than to stain their souls with action that was against their conscience?" This, however, was not the only disappointing experience of the Commission. Several Lithuanians moved to Zeeland, which had been pictured to them as the promised land. When they left they took as much as possible of the property of the colony with them, which had merely been loaned to them for their use. We do not wish to accuse them of theft. A pastor of those days expressed this opinion of them: "These people are not very intelligent and not especially capable of good judgment. For that reason, one must not interpret their weakness as a matter of evil." That is judging with love, and according to my opinion not incorrectly. The Lithuanians often showed great surprise when they were justly reproved. They were still like children and were characterized by the naughtiness and want of consideration peculiar to children. They could not, however, stay in Holland long. The intractability of their spiritual leader, Hans Jansen, who had absolute control and who tolerated no objections, made the situation impossible. By way of characterization, I want to quote a bit from his first and last letters to the Commission. In the first he writes, referring to the four Mennonite meeting places in Amsterdam: "The church 'The Sun' is a sun of righteousness, the Church 'The Tower' (The Gates) is a city on a high hill; the church 'The Lamb' gathers together the lambs of the Master, the church 'The Ark of Noah' protects the souls."--In his last letter, however, he writes: "For thirteen years I have lived in Poland during the difficult wars and have met Wallachians, Poles, Saxons, Swedes, Russians, and other heathen rabble, but never have I met such scal-

murdering hypocrites in the world as in your Society." That was a sad end. The Society, however, had learned to know this man and did not return evil for evil. On the contrary, it demonstrated a peculiarly high conception of its responsibility. The colonists embarked on September 22, 1736, at Amsterdam and reached their homeland November 16. On their arrival each one received four hundred guilders, the proceeds of a collection for them.

The Commission for Foreign Relief continued its work throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. Luckily, the times changed; the more the Era of Enlightenment took root the less religious persecution there was. After the French Revolution with its consequent separation of church and state the Commission had fulfilled its mission. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was actually dissolved.

Will we have to call it back to life today? Let us hope that Russian barbarism remains an exception! One thing this history had taught us: In former centuries there was a strong feeling of solidarity. Their brotherly love might sometimes have lacked understanding but it always showed itself ready to sacrifice; its power was a practical God-fearing attitude. I speak in their name when I close with the plea that this practical God-fearing attitude may endure to the end.

THE MENNONITES OF RUSSIA, 1917-1928*

By C. F. Klassen

As is well-known, the Mennonites began to migrate from East Prussia to Russia almost 150 years ago. As foreign colonists they were granted unusual privileges, but in spite of this the beginning in Russia was extraordinarily difficult. It was only after long years of trying and exhausting pioneer work that the colonies gradually began to enjoy a degree of economic prosperity, which once begun, however, continued almost unbroken until 1914.

Already many years before the war an energetic policy of russification of the German Colonies was pursued by certain governmental agencies. The Mennonites were able to resist this policy somewhat more easily than other groups, because of their strong organizations. For instance, we had the Mennonite Agricultural Union which had been founded by one of our greatest leaders, Johann Cornies. We also had our Educational Council, we had our annual conventions of delegates to deal with the matter of forest service, we had our well-grounded fire insurance system, and our model inheritance regulations, and finally, in ecclesiastical matters, our annual conferences. The natural consequence of the russification policy of the state on the one hand, together with the attitude of the dominant Greek Orthodox Church, and the work of our organizations on the other hand, was the development of a degree of "separatism" in the colonies. The problem of separatism, however, is a theme for itself which requires treatment as one of the dominant forces in the history of our colonies in the last twenty years, and which no one can better handle than our own Professor Benjamin Unruh, who possesses an extraordinarily rich archive of material which is waiting exploitation.

When the war broke out the above mentioned russification policy of the government developed into a veritable hate against all German colonists. This political chauvinism soon led to economic measures against the colonies. Among these measures should be mentioned, for instance, the notorious expropriation laws which had basically the same purpose which Stalin is attempting to accomplish to-day with his merciless policy of destruction. Already at that time the thought of emigration was seriously considered. The experiences of the war led to a feeling that one was without a homeland and without a fatherland.

In the spring of 1917 our dilapidated government broke down. In consequence of the revolution in February it seemed as though many favorable opportunities were appearing for us. The Mennonites, as all the German colonies, had been strengthened in their will to solidarity by the hard experiences of war-time. The new era opened up new possibilities and gave new challenges. Within a few months after the February revolution we were able to summon an all-Russian Mennonite convention which dealt with the various economic and cultural problems facing our colonies. This convention appointed an executive committee called the Mennonite Central Office ("Mennozentrum"), and laid down the necessary lines of policy for the work of the immediate future. Under the chairmanship of Professor Unruh the Mennozentrum became very active. It undertook a tremendous program of work.

The revolution in October, 1917, however, shattered all these plans. Lenin gave to Russia the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolutionary system, however, was not so readily and easily established. In many regions a wild anarchy set in, especially in South Russia. The bands of anarchists were particularly destructive in our Mennonite villages. It was in that awful time that in one night all the male inhabitants of one village were massacred. What our churches had to endure in those days cannot be described here in a few words, but demands extensive treatment in the prospective history to which I referred in the beginning. The anarchy in the south continued until Moscow brought discipline and order. At that time the southern churches sent an investigating committee the so-called "Studien Kommissios"

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to foreign countries to prepare the way for emigration.

In Moscow at that time, where the newly established order was most stable, there were a number of young Mennonite men, mostly such as had served in the hospital corps in the army, and had remained in Moscow after the war was over. I was among the number. We had been cut off from our home churches by the various fighting fronts which had been established. We had no connection with the south nor with the east, but through devious ways we found out that in the territories which were still in the possession of the Red Forces, mobilization of our young men was about to be carried through. We at once petitioned the Supreme Military Council at Moscow to free our young men from combatant service. At that time the various non-resistant groups in Moscow organized the so-called "United Council of Religious Bodies and Groups," in which we Mennonites had representatives. This "United Council" was legally recognized and was granted the right by the government to appear before the court as expert counsel in all cases of trial of those who refused military service. The "United Council" in those darkest years of anarchy succeeded by the help of God in preserving thousands of young men from the worst and in saving very many from death by execution. Naturally, the energetic work of the "United Council" soon became very obnoxious to the Bolsheviki, who set up a remarkable five-day trial against the members of the Council and dissolved the Council. The rich archive of the "United Council" was confiscated and has been almost totally lost. This archive, which unmasked the whole phraseology of the Bolsheviki about the "model" freedom of conscience enjoyed by every citizen of the Soviet State, had to be destroyed.

Conditions at home in the colonies varied from place to place. The situation was the worst in the South. Since the various colonies were isolated from each other, each colony had to help itself as best it could. It was not until July, 1920, that our congregations in East Russia and Siberia had the opportunity to summon a conference, the first since the revolution. Among other very important decisions of this conference was the decision to choose two representatives who were to look after the interests of the church in Moscow. These representatives were Peter Froese and the writer. In the beginning of our work in Moscow there were two questions which chiefly occupied our time. Closed churches had to be gotten back again from zealous local officers, and Communist teachers who had driven our own teachers from our schools had to be removed. The question of military service also caused us much work. We were able to accomplish considerable at that time from the government. In most instances all we had to do was to bring pressure upon the central authorities to restrain the radical revolutionary measures of the local provincial authorities.

The militant communism of the first years had led to complete economic bankruptcy, and Lenin had insight enough to issue a summons to retreat in the spring of 1921, and set up the so-called "new economic policy (Nep.)." We at once breathed easier. Our Mennonite people took new courage to work and we planned to create a strong Mennonite economic organization, but it was to be otherwise. A terrible drought destroyed the entire harvest of 1921. There were no reserves on hand, because everything had been surrendered to the government previously. Soon the first signs of the coming famine manifested themselves and all constructive work had to be laid aside.

Meanwhile we had news from the South that attempts were being made to organize, but the long civil war and the complete crop failure, together with the overcrowding in the colonies because of the immigration of those who had lost their property and who had become refugees because of persecution had created an almost indescribably difficult situation. In those days the work of Bro. B. B. Janz in the southern colonies was of exceptional value.

In the early summer of this year we received through round-about channels a letter from Professor Alvin Miller, the representative of the American Mennonite

Relief at Constantinople, in which he informed us that all his attempts to secure a permit to enter Russia had been in vain, and that he therefore asked that we undertake the necessary steps in Moscow to secure his admission. Our endeavors in the Kremlin to accomplish this, however, were in vain at this time. Then we decided to try to get a permit for myself to go to Constantinople and establish the contact there with the Constantinople representatives of A. M. R. (American Mennonite Relief). My lengthy oral discussion with Litvinov who was at that time Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs, led to the result that I was given a permit for the journey by the foreign office. In the meantime the so-called "All Russian Relief Committee" was organized. However, after a short period of work it was dissolved by the government and most of its members were put into prison. Time will not permit me to report the very interesting details of those agitated months. So instead of being able to go to Constantinople I myself was put into the prison of the secret police (Cheka). At this time the Soviet Government was already conducting negotiations with the representatives of Hoover which led to an agreement with the A. R. A. (American Relief Administration). Alvin Miller was now also able to come to Moscow. In those days I was released from prison and had the opportunity to help Professor Miller. In addition to the actual work of organizing in Moscow many trips had to be taken into the famine regions, trips which in view of the bad transportation facilities were more than difficult. More could be said about the work of the relief organizations, about the difficult situation in the colonies, about the horrors of famine itself, but those who are interested in these matters will find a rather extensive report of the famine and the relief work in the book, Feeding the Hungry, published by the Mennonite Central Committee at Scottdale, Pa., in 1929. Through the relief work thousands of our brethren were rescued from death and starvation. Countless tears were dried. What we experienced in those days cannot be pictured with a few words. It must be experienced. Many families who had already for considerable time been sustaining themselves only on field mice, crows, carcasses of dead animals and wild plants, etc., suddenly received white bread, milk, sugar, fat and rice. Permit me to mention one case out of the countless experiences of that time. I was on a tour of inspection in the Volga. The American food supplies had just been distributed. In my visits I came to a family with many children. Mother and father had faces and limbs swollen from hunger, the children were emaciated. The mother had already mixed some dough and the oldest girl was trying to make fire in the stove which had not been heated for a long time and therefore smoked quite a bit. At last the fire caught and the mother put the dish with the dough on the stove with considerable ceremony, and put the first biscuits into the pan in which some American lard had been melted. The children all stood around the stove. The mother could not restrain the tears of gratitude which rolled freely down over her cheeks and dropped onto the stove. But the eyes of the children! Those looks I will never forget. I could not contain my feelings any longer and slipped out of the house quietly. In the eyes of the children I read that all the dollars, gilders, and marks which had been given were bearing interest, an interest of which the givers had no conception. The whole relief work of our foreign congregations was a demonstration of love.

The southern colonies, which contain approximately three-fifths of the Mennonites of Russia, belong to the autonomous republic of the Ukraine. For this reason they could not organize an economic union together with the other colonies. Therefore, they organized their own Mennonite Economic Union with its headquarters in the village of Tiege, which were removed in the year 1925 to Charchov, the capital of the Ukraine. The leader and chairman of the Union until its reorganization in the year 1926 was B. B. Janz, whose name is well-known, even in our foreign congregations, on account of his untiring work in the emigration of our brethren from Russia in the years 1923-24-25. I am sorry I have no report about the work of this southern union. Its service in the field of stock-breeding, particularly in the improvement in the quality of the "German Red Cow," was recognized by the state. The butter of the union had an extraordinarily good reputation in Charchov, as well

as in the best resorts on the southern coast of the Crimea. All the splendid work of the southern union was hamstrung, however, by its compulsory reorganization in the year 1926, and was altogether destroyed in the following years.

In the year 1922, after the severest part of the famine had been overcome, the eastern colonies tried to again create an economic organization. We prepared a constitution which was submitted to the Central Government in Moscow for examination and approval. Many consultations in the various government offices were necessary and almost five months passed until it was finally approved on May 16, 1923. The poverty in the colonies was great, but the will to work of our Mennonites was greater. The constitution was really quite good and deserves further consideration in the forthcoming history. It had a good foundation for work. On the basis of our constitution we were able to organize the individual settlements by establishing branches of the "All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union," (AMLV.) as our organization called itself. As time went on these branches became developed sufficiently to have their own individual constitutions. That was a great work, a constant struggle with the local officials, but finally we had achieved the organization of nineteen branch units with fifty-six sub-branches and a membership of 5,965 family-farm units. In other words we had succeeded in organizing into a cooperative union 80% of all the Mennonite farms in Siberia, on the Volga, in Turkestan, in the Caucasus, and in the Crimea. Thus we included all the Mennonite colonies in Russia except those in the Ukraine. The work of our local organizations concerned itself chiefly with the production of pure seed and with stock-breeding. They produced seed of first, second, and third grades, as well as special seed. The work of our organization was recognized by the government offices as thoroughly useful, and the products of our seed growing associations were certified by the government experimental stations as very good. Quite a number of scientific books give evidence to this fact. Striking results were also achieved in the field of stock breeding. In Siberia it was the "German Red Cow." These improvements we carried on under the direction of experienced zoologists. In addition dairying was promoted, particularly the manufacture of cheese. Brick cheese and Dutch cheese were produced in large quantities and placed on the market. Stations for the cleaning of grain and the care of tractors should also be mentioned, but these and other points would lead me too far afield and must be left to the pen of Professor Unruh in his history.

The above-mentioned facts, of course, completely refute the unreasonable charges brought by several foreign newspapers who went so far during the flight of the German farmers out of Russia as to assert that the German refugees were composed of farmers who out of protest against the political system in Soviet Russia would neither work nor obey the law and therefore fled from Russia. The German farmers in Russia have thoroughly demonstrated that they wanted to work and that even when they had been "legally" robbed of everything they nevertheless began at once to build up again as soon as they were allowed to do so. The astonishing fortitude which particularly our Mennonite farmers demonstrated in economic matters has scarcely yet been properly appreciated, and must be left to the verdict of later history.

A great work was also done by our organization in Moscow in connection with the emigration of our brethren from Russia to Canada. Naturally, we tried to work out a sound basis of realism in this matter. All through the years we dealt openly and frankly with the Soviet government in regard to the emigration and developed the whole movement in altogether legal channels. How we took care of the emigration movement with the government in Moscow, and what was accomplished in this direction by our work cannot be discussed here because of lack of time, but must also be left to Professor Unruh's history.

A unique work in the transportation of our emigrants to Canada and their care there has been accomplished by the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization at

Rosthern, Saskatchewan. I believe that this organization would often have given up and broken down in the face of the at times almost unconquerable difficulties, and would not have been able to take care of twenty thousand of our people to the present time, if the chairman, Bishop David Toews, had not devoted himself with a loving heart and with enduring patience and with constantly fresh optimism throughout the entire movement. The conference will hear two very interesting reports in regard to this relief work from Bishop Toews later.

Already in the year 1924 we endeavored to secure from Moscow permission to publish an agricultural periodical, but almost a year passed before we received the permit. The first number of the periodical, The Practical Farmer (Der Praktische Landwirt) appeared on May 14, 1925. Naturally, we were not permitted to publish anything political or religious. We had a constant struggle with the censors who saw in every non-Bolshevist publication a danger for the publishing monopoly of the Soviet government. The Bolshevist cowards feared every freely spoken and written word which might possibly make a hole in their tissue of lies. By hook and crook we carried the publication of The Practical Farmer through to December of 1926, when we had to cease publication.

It would be easier to report about the work of our associations if these associations had been able to work longer and maintain the successes of our work beyond the year 1926. In that year the entire economic policy of the Bolsheviki in regard to the peasants underwent a tremendous change. The hoped-for world revolution had not yet come. The Soviet was surrounded by capitalistic states, all of which were working feverishly for their own reconstruction. In order to become more independent of the capitalistic neighbors Stalin considered it necessary to turn the entire attention of the party to heavy industry. Heavy industry was now supported in every possible way at the cost of agriculture. The agricultural taxes became unbearable, both the direct and indirect taxes in the form of "voluntary" subscriptions to government loans. Life became almost impossible.

We had attempted to build up our Mennonite agricultural cooperative, as well as our consumers' cooperatives in such a fashion that they would act as a protection against the disintegrating Bolshevist influence, insofar as it affected our settlements. The attacks of the communists, their unceasing attempts to bolshevize our administrative organizations, required constant defensive struggle. Imported German communists from Germany, Austria, and the border states, most of whom were tough fellows who knew neither Russian conditions nor the Mennonites, were sent to the German colonies from Moscow with orders to strengthen the revolution in the colonies. As soon as these fellows noticed that our organizations had succeeded up to that time in protecting the settlements from a rapid sovietizing, they directed their entire hate against us as leaders of our organizations.

It had been clear to us from the beginning that since the revolution had dissolved all ownership of land, a productive and constructive work in agriculture would only be possible if the right of usufrucht of the land would be stabilised. The solution of this problem meant much work, but we achieved considerable success. Our Mennonite farmers were for the most part recognized as intensive farmers who had the right to the use of the maximum amount of land.

This increased the hate of the above mentioned foreign Communists toward us. They did their utmost to undermine our work and create animosity against us in the various government offices. The consequence was that already in 1927 we were able to accomplish scarcely any productive work, but rather had to struggle to maintain even the most elementary possibility of work for our settlements. Naturally this could not last much longer. In the field of foreign politics the Soviet government had brought about very few changes of significance, and so the Communist party began a drive of rapid socialization of agriculture. We realized that the final dissolution of our AMLV was but a few months away. An outstanding Russian economist,

of whom we had learned in the course of years to expect the truth, told us confidentially that the party would be compelled to dissolve us on the following grounds:

1. The AMLV had throughout its existence nourished the illusion among the Mennonites that the Mennonites had a right to their own cooperative and to individual development.

2. The AMLV had always been a handicap in the program of sovietizing the Mennonite colonies.

3. From the point of view of the Soviet policy it had been a mistake in every respect for the central government to authorize the establishment of the AMLV, thereby promoting a Mennonite separatism which was intolerable in view of the Bolshevist policy toward nationalities in Russia.

This statement was clear and only confirmed what we had long known. We had long seen through the entire tissue of lies which had been woven around the famous liberal policy of Bolshevism toward nationalities in Russia. We were not to be allowed to have a free economic administration and not a free development of our cultural genius. They wanted to transform us into the same proletarians with neither religion nor nationality, just as they had already done with the numerous racial minorities and are still doing to-day, and now, in order to accomplish their criminal work in our colonies as well, our organization had to be extirpated.

In the late summer of 1928 we were finally dissolved. All that had been accomplished by the years of exertion and sacrifice which our local organizations had made, all the result of the sacrificial labor in which the leaders constantly risked their freedom and very often also their lives, were now destroyed in a short time.

Naturally, we were far away from the ideology of the ruling class, the Bolsheviki, and we always spoke openly in Moscow in whatever concerned the colonies. We wanted to have the possibility of work for our farmers quite independent of the prevailing political system, and since we felt that our endeavors in this direction were in no conflict with the interest of Russian economy in general, we felt fully justified in struggling for the accomplishment of our demands with a good conscience. We attempted with all the means which were at our command to conserve the good which our fathers had handed down to us and to create new values. How far our attempts were successful under the terrible conditions with which we had to labor must be left to the judgment of impartial historians.

The later developments in our settlement after 1928 will be discussed in detail by Professor Unruh in his report.

In ecclesiastical matters our congregations were permitted relative freedom of activity for several years after the revolution. The law forbade religious instruction for children it is true, and in our schools this instruction had to be given up, but we tried as much as possible to improve our religious services for children on Sundays and to develop capable leaders for this work. In January 1925, after long years, a General Mennonite Conference was able to meet again. Those were great days in Moscow, days which we will never forget. Delegates of our congregations had gathered from all Russia and we were permitted to work undisturbed for several days. We were glad enough for this opportunity. It was the first general conference after the revolution, and unfortunately was the last. In the following year the situation of our teachers and preachers became constantly worse. The teachers were required not only to give up all religious instruction in the school, but also to give direct anti-religious instruction. Many teachers voluntarily gave up their schools, others were expelled by the authorities and were without jobs and without food, others attempted to hold out at their posts for the sake of the children, even under the most difficult circumstances. We can scarcely

imagine even a small part of the nerve-wracking struggles which our teachers had to go through with the school officials, nor can we imagine the perhaps still more trying inner struggles in which they stood alone without the support of anyone, and in spite of an inner repugnance against the entire educational policy of the government nevertheless remained at their posts in order to protect the children from the godless influence of their successors. If we had realized what they were going through there would have been much more prayer in their behalf.

The General Conference of 1925 decided to publish a religious monthly periodical. The periodical was assigned to the Commission for Church Matters ("Kommission fur Kirchliche Angelegenheiten," KFK). The KFK had represented all the Mennonite communities in particularly ecclesiastical matters since 1924. The officers consisted of three members with headquarters in the South. I have no time to go into detail in regard to the often unconquerable difficulties which the officials of the Central Government as well as the local officials created for these brethren in their work. This will need to be treated at length in the above mentioned history. The organ of the General Conference, Unser Blatt was published in spite of great difficulty and frequent delays due to the censors until June, 1928, and was then suppressed. Somewhat earlier the itinerant evangelism had been forbidden, and the preachers had been limited to their own congregations. The right to vote was taken from the preachers and they were burdened with various taxes which in most cases led to complete confiscation of property. If they could not pay the inhuman taxes they were thrown into prison. The Bolsheviki naturally do not want to have this procedure called a persecution of Christians, but they simply reckoned the preachers as "kulaks," and this class was to be destroyed. What it means to a preacher to attempt to serve his congregation under such pressure can only be understood by one who has personally experienced it, and in spite of everything we have many, many preachers who are continuing faithfully in service, in spite of the fact that they stand in daily danger of suffering the fate of their colleagues who are lying in prison, or who are suffering terrible things in the far north, far from their families and from their congregations, in the forests or in the concentration camps, or who were able to escape in time and now are wandering about, to-day ere and tomorrow there, in constant danger of being caught by their pursuers. God alone knows their need and God alone can help them.

The great need of our brethren in Russia has brought the Mennonites of the entire world closer together. Previously we were strangers and to-day we are so close together. One feels this when one comes to his brethren in the various congregations or into their homes, whether it is in Germany, Holland, the United States, or Canada.

Again in these days, as I have so often before, I let the conditions of our Mennonite communities at home in Russia since the revolution pass before my mind's eye: economic disintegration, famine, emigration, flight, etc., and finally I stopped a few moments beside the graves of our dear ones in the lonely railroad stations along the northern railroad and in the infinite stretches of primitive forests in the far north. I vision the brethren who are crowded together there in the narrow barracks where many a mother heart cries out to the Lord for a daughter who has been torn from her, where hungry children cry for bread, and where the sick cry for help, where thousands and thousands long for deliverance and where no help is to be had. I vision my colleagues who are now for over a year in prison in Moscow, who are being tortured. There are so many thousands who are waiting in vain for help and yet we know that the Lord cares for all and will act when the time comes. And then when I think of all the wonderful help which the Mennonites of the entire world have rendered to their brethren in need, then I can better understand what the Apostle Paul meant in his challenge to the Galatians (Gal. 6:9) "Let us not be weary in well-doing." Dear brethren, you and your churches are not yet weary, this conference demonstrates it to us. How is that possible? Only

because God has loved us human beings with a love eternal, love which exceeds all thought in its mercy, and exceeds all comprehension, and this conference is a new demonstration of love.

The Lord has given us Mennonites of Russia many friends. He has also given us the right men who with much love and with a sanctified patience from the Lord have conducted a work of relief and salvation for us and continue to do so. How gladly I would like to mention the sacrificing work of each of these brethren, but that is not possible to-day. Nevertheless, each representative of our 20,000 immigrants to Canada, and our dear refugees in Brazil, and Paraguay, and Moelln, will, I am sure, join with me. I feel the need on this historic occasion of thanking you and your churches most heartily. May this conference be filled with the spirit of Christ and may its participants perform the work of the conference, equipped with a strong faith. Let us remind ourselves again that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus." Only on this foundation are we able "to each bear his brother's burden," and that in the full sense of the apostolic word. Let us, therefore, do all that we do, whatever we counsel together and whatever we wish to undertake, as before Him and under the authority of His word. To Him, the Father, belongeth the honor, and His blessing I wish to this conference in rich measure.

RELIEF WORK OF THE DUTCH MENNONITES
by S.H.N. Gorter

I need not say much on this subject because much of it has already come to your attention from other reports on the work of the Dutch. With the Dutch relief work it becomes quite clear how everything is bound together organically, or better, how God knits the group together. The Russian brethren helped us in mission work, while on the other hand the relief work in Holland for the suffering Russians was begun in the mission association by Dr. A. K. Kuiper in Amsterdam. From it was organized the General Commission for Foreign Relief (Algemeene Commissie voor Buitenlandsche Nooden) whose chairman, Bro. Pastor Binnerts, and whose secretary, Rev. F. C. Fleischer, carried out the main part of the work. Four hundred thousand guilders were collected in Holland for famine relief in which we worked together with the American Relief agency. Later a seed loan was made, the majority of which was repayed.

In the year 1924 the first emigrants came through Rotterdam on their way to Canada and Mexico. They came in order to thank us for the help in their famine.

Soon it became apparent that here again relief work was needed. For this reason the Dutch Mennonite Emigration Bureau (Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau)was organized as a branch of the General Commission for Foreign Relief and soon afterwards became associated with the organizations in Russia, Germany, Canada, and the U.S.A. This bureau brought aid to somewhere near 1000 migrants in various ways. Bro. J. N. de Jong was in charge of the technical management, and Dr. M. P. Schütte was the physician. In the year 1929, as a result of the mass flight, the bureau became enlarged, accepting also members from churches outside of Rotterdam. The General Mennonite Society (Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sozieteit) supported the bureau, and help came from almost all of the churches and organizations of the brotherhood. Nearly 100,000 guilders were gathered. This amount was to apply to the colonization in Brazil as well as for other purposes (help for those that fled to Persia, for the "Canadian Corner", etc). Also in this association they worked together with other committees. The Dutch relief work is a blessing for the brotherhood in our country which stimulates activity to perform new deeds.

RELIEF WORK OF THE GERMAN MENNONITES
by Christian Neff

On the 3rd and 4th of April 1918--twelve years have already elapsed--a memorable meeting took place at Weierhof. It was called by those Russian Mennonites who were held back in Germany by the World War. One deliberated about the fate of the brethren in Russia. This became evident: they could not stay in Russia. Sooner or later their fate there would be sealed. Some thought of organizing a large scale emigration, and suggested among others settlements in the German Colonies. A petition was presented to the German Chancellor and he was asked to intervene diplomatically. Events ocurred differently--quite differently. The collapse of our country (Germany) followed. The diplomatic channels became defunct. In December 1919, the Investigation Commission of the Russian Mennonites came to Germany. Their goal, however, was America to investigate possibilities for colonization there. In April 1920 we had a conference with them in Heilbronn. The founding of a relief organization was conceived. In the meantime numerous refugees were continually coming across the borders into Germany.

They were placed into detention camps where severe need prevailed among them. That led to the organization of the Mennonite Refugee Care, (Mennonitische Fluchtlingsfürsorge) later named "German-Mennonite Aid Society" (Deutsche Mennoniten Hilfe) established in Ludwigshafen on the Rhine in November 1920. A not small task was undertaken. Before anything else was done, the refugee families, who had been deprived of all their possessions, were provided with food and clothing. In Gronau 35 families were housed where they found remunerative employment in the cotton mills of the Van Delden family. Furthermore eight families were settled in Mecklenburg. It was a promising beginning, but as soon as the settlers had acquired the necessary financial means, they migrated to America. Only one family stayed and they own a profitable farm today. Thirteen persons were busy in the brush factory which was established in Haslachmühle by Wilhelmsdorf in Württemburg. The profits that accumulated from the sale of goods were distributed on a percentage basis among the group.

On the 4th of September 1922, we sent 12,000 school books together with other literature into the Ukraine. We could partially fill a call from our Russian Brethren for 10,000 Bibles. Through the gratifying help of the mission society, "Light in the East" (Licht im Ostem), which has done much for the Russian brethren, we could send 4000 Bibles to Russia on November 20, 1924, packed in 20 cases. A large shipment of the Mennonitisches Lexikon and the Gedenkschrift went to them also. More than 220 food packages could be forwarded to the Russian brethren through arrangement with the Nansen Relief and the German Red Cross. On January 26, 1923 we dispatched 23 bales of clothing and a large chest to them. We have also shared in the purchase of seed grain and economical farm machinery.

A grand vision of the future loomed before us as we took over the Lechfeld area. The former troop drilling field was to be cultivated--800 hectars (1976.8 acres) of land were placed at our disposal by the Bavarian Government. Many hundreds of persons were sheltered here in barracks and took jobs on farms as well as in the industry department consisting of a basket factory and a needlework factory. It was expected that many would set up a permanent home here and obtain their own land. It did not turn out that way. But Lechfeld proved to be a great benefice through the errection of a transient camp. This was used in 1923, when the great emigration of the Russian brethren set in. Already in Latvia 20% of the refugees were sent back after their first examination by an English doctor because of an eye disease called Trachoma. They could not stay in Lettland. They couldn't return to Russia. Germany had to take them.

In Lechfeld they were welcomed and taken care of. From July 27 until December 19, 658 Mennonite refugees arrived. Other refugees joined those who had taken the

routes through Danzig, Bulgaria, Serbia and Poland. Finally to extend the rescuing hand of the brotherhood to those who were to be forcibly sent back, a special charity chest was established at the suggestion of F. C. Fleischer of Winterswijk (June 28, 1922).

The means to provide maintenance and medical care for these co-religionists came principally from America, Switzerland and Holland. Our Swiss brethren have helped us faithfully with advice and deeds that are never to be forgotten. For the sake of completeness let me also mention the child feeding program which was carried on in ten cities.

On December 16, 1926, it was agreed to liquidate the organization German Mennonite Aid Society. Its purpose was ended. With heavy hearts we ceased our work, as we felt that our mutual aid to our Russian co-religionists was not yet at an end. But we did not conceive that such a terrible plight awaited them. When the rumors were confirmed and Bro. Unruh gave us an accurate report of the terrible situation of the Russian Brethren last November, we agreed immediately on a large scale relief project. We called a conference in Heilbronn to present this problem. There it was discussed. We set up an organization made up of our West Prussian brethren and the United Mennonite Churches in Germany (on whose activity Bro. Händiges will speak to us) and a collecting center for clothes and funds was organized. Large amounts of clothes for distribution and over 36,000 Reichs mark were collected for love gifts. Of these gifts came from Switzerland 6053 RM, from Alsaace 4875 RM, from Poland 845 RM, from France 410 RM--15,000RM were assigned to the DRK (German Red Cross) and 12,000 RM were applied to the "Canadian Corner". Numerous private relief organizations were used and relief money was sent to Russia.

So we were allowed to help with the great relief work in which the Mennonites of the world united. May the Lord bless it !

A SUPPLEMENTARY PICTURE OF RELIEF WORK
by G. Fast

We, the former West Prussians, are privileged to greet today co-religionists from all over the world. Our group is acquainted with many of you while others we probably know only through reputation. Therefore it may be appropriate to mention something of our history in addition to what our honored dear brother Christian Neff has presented.

"Mutual Aid" is nothing new to us Mennonites. It has been practically demonstrated from the earliest history on. However, in the days of old we did not have a special organization nor such large operational methods as they are generally in use today. Everything, both contributions and distribution, occurred voluntarily according to the standards of brotherly love.

When our fathers settled here in about the middle of the 16th century, first isolated in the cities of Danzig and Elbing, and later also in the swamps of the Vistula and the lowlands of the Nogat, they brought with them nothing but industrious hands accustomed to hard work, and clear heads which soon surveyed the status of the market and found possibilities to earn a living. In the cities they entered into business or worked as tradesmen. On the land they earned rich returns from the long desolated swamps, improved the livestock, and became model land owners. Nevertheless, they were soon everywhere denounced, but chiefly in the cities. It was not because they were troublesome, unsociable people--they were on the contrary peace loving, industrious citizens but, according to reports, they were "people of an inadmissible religion" and moreover, "disagreeable competitors for business, professions, or trade." They suffered silently and patiently many a harm and set-back because of their convictions, yet they were always "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (I Peter 3:15)

In the year 1678 also here in Danzig, a "Religious Examination" occurred in which the Elder and the minister had to answer 40 or 50 questions before the learned clerical dignitaries. This "hearing" had a peculiar effect which interests us today. Manhardt in his Story of the Danzig Congregation pointed out a note of George Hansen's which the Episcopal Civil clerk in Danzig had released against a number of Mennonites approximately two years after the "Religious Examination": "As your two congregations sent their confessions together with the questions and answers through the bishop of our city to the Pope in Rome, as is customary in such instances, the Pope cleared himself on this, that the Mennonites, with their delivered confessions, could be counted openly as belonging among the Christian Religions". We could not ask for more.

Though they were reported to be disagreeable competitors, they soon made themselves indispensible so that it was noted: "That the Mennonites could not be expelled from Danzig without great detriment to the business."

But for both, toleration of belief and in business, they had to pay a high price. Here we find a note of the previously mentioned Hansen: "On my assurance that we would like to show our gratitude, they took first their stand as desiring nothing but then they sent to William Dunkel and called for the previously mentioned gratitude which amounted to about 210 fl." When in the year 1751, the Mennonites were allowed to build a chapel in the Orlofferfeld with eclesiastical permission, the building fund amounted to 7,830 fl (1 Florin equals 1.88Mk). Payments to the Bishop, Auditor, the servants and the clergy of the nearby Catholic church amounted upwards to 3,000 fl. At any time the authorities, the secular as well as the spiritual, saw to it that our fathers did not hold too tightly to the pennies in their pockets.

That did not hold back our fathers to help the needy brethren with money and provisions. The church in Danzig as well as in the larger Werder congregation constituted a large church which was held together through brotherly love. In the first half of the 18th century the Mennonites in the Werder were divided into four parts all of which at first was served by a common Elder although each had their own preacher and teacher. Already here it becomes apparent that they felt united and pledged themselves to mutual relief work. When in 1586, the congregations of Thorn and Montau together with three Werder congregations bound themselves closer together, this striving for mutual aid became apparent. The notes of the two Elders Donner, father and son, of the Orlofferfeld Congregation show mutual aid in a number of instances. In 1734, the following amounts were received by the Danzig congregation which had suffered so hard through the Russian siege: from Holland 3,000 fl., from Heubuden 300 fl., and from Elbing 1,000 fl. In 1765, the churches helped the flood refugees in Ellerwald near Elbing and likewise the refugees from the fire in Königsberg. In 1767, the exiled from Poland and the Mennonite settlers in Brenkenhofswalde im Warthebruch were given nearly 5,000 fl., and 1766/68 the Orlofferfelde congregation subsidized the Thiensdorf congregation, which suffered flood, with 7 loads of grain equivalent to 330 cwt. In the year 1816, Thiensdorf could repay this good turn through a gift of 220 cwt of grain when Orlofferfelde was having a flood. Those Mennonites who lived in the plains of the Vistula river, were often flooded out. Stobbe in his story of the Montau-Gruppe Congregation mentioned 20 dikes breaking in the period from 1565 to 1855. This always brought great periods of need. When the Nogat Dam broke near Joanasdorf in 1898, the Thiensdorf-Markushof settlements were most heavily hit. In response to the need there came through the Danzig congregation from Holland, and also from other parts of Germany, more than 33,000 Reichsmark.

Our fathers were ready at all times to give aid and to sacrifice for the construction of the meeting houses of the sister congregations. When the quarters in Werder, of which we spoke, organized themselves into congregations and could build a meeting house, (1755 at Rosenort, 1768 at Heubuden, Tiegenhagen, Ladekopperfeld, and Furstenwerderfeld) they shared in this happy turning of events and supported each other with all their might. When the first Lords Supper was celebrated in the newly built meeting house at Rosenort, 1,562 communion guests shared in the communion which included 33 teachers and deacons, and at the installation of the Elder in the same meeting house the same year, from 2,500 to 3,000 persons were present. Thus we see they felt as one body and expressed it on every occasion. The congregation in Orlofferfeld in 1794 supported the building of a meetinghouse for the Markushof congregation with 555 fl. In 1796 there was gathered in Werder 356 fl. for the meetinghouse builking in Chortitz, (Russia) and the brethren themselves aided exceptionally well in the establishment of the very first settlements in South Russia. In 1801 the congregation of Neuwid which had suffered heavily as a result of the war was given 4,134 fl. from here. The congregation of Danzig received in 1818 from Konigsberg 1,836 fl. and from the Werder congregation something like 2,000 fl. for meetinghouse construction. Moreover, in addition to the 800 fl. from two brethren in Marienburg, the home congregation of Friedelsheim spent 749 Thalers in 1837 for a small meetinghouse. In the year 1896, a Bro. Engbrecht of the Caucasus visited our congregation in order to gather funds for building a meetinghouse in his home Wohldemfurst, and he was given a considerable sum. The small church of the Congregation Obernessau, now Niezanska, near Thorn was built with the help of our congregation. And, finally in Sumatra, the little church of Moera Sipongi is a monument of the participation or our congregation in mission work.

Although it does not belong here, but nevertheless we should mention the sums of money that our fathers paid besides taxes and "protection money" to the government of our land. In the year 1806, Abrahn Nickel in Graudenz presented to the fleeing King as a gift of the Mennonites the sum of 30,000 Thalers which was followed by 10,000 Thalers more in 1810.

The fact that we in the German-Mennonite-Aid Society and now in Relief Work for our brethren in Russia can work together with the brethren of the faith of the whole world, strengthens us to hold to the faith of our fathers and strengthens the bond of brotherly love and fellowship based on similar foundations of belief.

In the intimate circles of our conference we deliberate and confirm brotherly relief work. Also now and then, if we have any funds left in our shrinking treasury, we reach out of our circle to undertakings and organizations of the larger brotherhood. The brotherly aid that every congregation shares with members impoverished by the devaluation of money is its own concern and does not necessarily need to be mentioned.

Let us rejoice in a thankful manner to be able to build further on the foundations which our fathers have laid according to Gal. 6:10.

THE MASS FLIGHT OF THE GERMAN FARMERS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, THEIR BASIS, THE RESULTS IN RUSSIA AND ITS EFFECT ON FOREIGN RELIEF WORK

by Benjamin Unruh

1. The Decisive Battle

"In November 1927, the struggle with the Kulaks entered a new phase. The decision of the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia was that one must and should definitely suppress the privately owned capitalist farmers. At the end of 1928, new agrarian laws were published in order to "overcome the Kulaks" and the "suppression of the profit system." Through certain laws in the Spring of '28 and '29, the "imposition of individual taxes" was ordered for all Kulak farms, and in June 1929, the state controlled the raising of large crops of grain which up to that time had been the responsibility of the individual villages. That meant that the levying of taxes was in reality shifted upon the shoulders of those who had no right to vote and no influence on the resolutions at the village meetings but were merely considered objects. The state had under all circumstances to secure large amounts of grain for the suffering cities and the industrial sections in order to restore the depleted reserves for the nourishment of the cities. As result of Stalin's famous new article of the Spring of this year (1930), we could see the confirmation of that which the expert on the Russian situation had always known, namely that the decrees of the Central Office in Moscow are usually carried out too harsh rather than too mild by the local authorities and by the special commissions. None other than Rykow has spoken of the "Feudal Militaristic Exploitation" of the peasantry. Everything actually has been said which can be said about the rigorous extortion methods used in obtaining grain for the cities. Already in 1928, the situation of the farmers was difficult as result of the resolution of the previously mentioned party congress, but in 1929 and 1930 the situation became unbearable. He who did not deliver as much as the state requested (and it requested in most cases more than the amount that was produced) forfeited his property. Household goods and the house itself went under the hammer. The debtor's prison of the Middle Ages was brought to life again in which the thrifty, ruined farmer had to languish for a long imprisonment.

In October 1929, there appeared in the official organ of the Communist Party of Russia Iswetija the word "Decisive Battle". It meant the last, large scale liquidation of the Russian Village. With that, according to the understanding of the officials of the Party, the Russian Revolution has entered its decisive stage. That this critical turn was aimed just against the Russian village, made it the most pitiless completion of the revolutionary destiny. The aim of this titanic Bolshevist purpose was the building up of a gigantic socialist structure. Its realization has now begun, consciously and energetically. Many of the leaders themselves became afraid of the stormy speed which they had entered. But Stalin ruled the hour, he goes his way with a steady purpose and brazen steps. The well-known "Five Year Plan" sets for five years the direction for a constructive planned economy and its program. The carrying through of this plan has been the ambition of this man of strong will after he had first disposed of the opposition, both on the left and on the right.

The "Decisive Battle" must be fought out above all in the villages due to the particular conditions of Russia. Here was the chief obstacle for the socialization of the national economy, here was the passive, and here and there also active oppositions against making the farms collective. If Moscow succeeds here, the "Decisive Battle" has won. Then the road to the intended goal has been opened.

Stalin took the bull by the horns. He did not yield to his opponents. We know that Trotsky had remonstrated to him that he had ignored the actual supporters of the revolution, the laboring class of industry, the city proletariat, in favor of the farmers, and that he worked into the hands of those who were nearly members of the opposition on the right.

This protest of Trotsky, one has to understand.

The heart of the political problem of Russia has always been the agrarian question or the peasant problem. Also the Russian Revolution in its origin and its single phases is to be understood best under the aspect of the farming problem. It has grown out of the agrarian crisis, and its story is predominantly one of a vicious controversy with the village.

The premise that the Bolshevist Revolution without the Russian village could not have taken place, or the idea that the peasant class particularly helped the Bolshevist idea to power, I will not discuss here. But I would like to point out briefly that the single phases of the Russian Revolution received their character from the peasant class--from the villages.

The first period of the War Communism (1917-1921) could be characterized through the political aims of working for a pure communist commonwealth. We know from the words of Lenin himself that in March 1921, that this first attempt failed to master things according to the program. I shall not characterize this period in detail with its rash decrees, its expropriation, socialization, regimented economy, forbidding everything under private initiative, stoppage of production, the inflation, the bootlegging etc. Lenin and the other leaders of the Revolution really did not want to socialize the state hastily. But the events moved quickly and made leaders to be led. Already in October 1918, Lenin wanted to bring out the "Food Tax Law" which actually went into effect in March 1921, to which I will return later and which is an unalterable evidence that his dynamic revolution could be restrained. In the Spring of 1921 at the 10th Party Congress, he pointed very drastically and candidly to the catastrophic results of the War Communism and his speeches there will always remain the most reliable source for the critical examination of the first phase of the revolution. He delivered the most bitter, the most pitiless funeral oration for the War Communism. He asked for a complete change of tactics, a retreat, emphasizing that by this retreat he could gain a breathing spell and that in an opportune time the battle line could and must be pushed forward again against the capitalistic system. Now the tax must be set aside.

It was above all the village which suffered frightfully as result of the War Communism and which had thrown the economy into complete anarchy. Confiscations in the villages were on the daily program in this period. Since political questions are mostly above all food questions, it was only consistant that the peasant class in this period turned more and more against this power politics practicing passive resistance or business sabotage besides occasional rebellions. The farmer returned to the old domestic economy, that is he produced only enough for himself. His dissatisfaction was intensified under the pressure of the so-called poor committees in the villages, in which the village proletariat had organized themselves, and which were thought of asspearhead of the revolutionary trends in the peasant masses.

The second period of the NEP brought a remarkable recovery to the unified soviet economy, in particular to the agricultural economy. The previously mentioned "Food Tax Law" levied a natural tax from the farmers in place of the farmer, destructive compulsory levy. To be sure, this natural tax was very hard and as close to confiscation as daughter resembles her mother. The actual harshness was revealed in the fact that the taxes were not computed according to the fields cultivated, but reached all the land in possession of the farmer. Very pressing was also the disparity between the prices for the agricultural products and those of industrial goods. Fundamentally as well as practically, however, the NEP period was a time of recovery, the stabilizing and the reconstruction of the village. This applied particularly to the German Colony which in its solidarity and industrious economy had a good honest leadership, trustworthy also in a political sense, in loyalty toward the government. To the village it became all important that the

surplus grain now could be brought to the open market in free trade. Things changed with compelling swiftness back to money economy. Of course, the previously mentioned policy of price disparity carried with it the political danger of inflation: the peasants had to give unusually large quantities of agricultural products in exchange for industrial products. Yet in the year 1924, because of the successful stabilization of the currency there was a new moment for the quieting of the peasant mind and likewise a moment of encouragement for agriculture.

After the death of Lenin, yes even during his sickness, the controversy flared up over the question whether this peasant policy was the right one or not. Stalin maintained it, supported by Rykow, against Sinowjew Trotsky. In fact Stalin expanded the policy further on in the year 1925. The motto was at that time "Turn all attention to the village." Through a decree on January 16, 1925 (published on January 27) all elections in areas in which peasants did not participate in voting were declared invalid. More, the franchise of the peasant was consciously extended. The peasant had the right to nominate candidates and to vote. Next the agricultural tax was significantly reduced. In 1924 the tax plan scheduled 470 million rubles of which but 340 million were actually collected. In 1925 only 280 million rubles were levied. Of this money such large sums were made available to the local administration ("Wolost") that approximately 40% of all taxes served the local economy. The Central government also reached out through strong regulations forbidding any taxation of farmers through the village Soviet. An additional law allowed the taking on of a lease as well as the leasing of land. The farmer was again allowed to be an employer, and the agricultural employee was permitted to work longer than eight hours.

We recognize here a remarkable consistency of Stalin's policy toward the building up of the NEP policy. Foreign observers at that time could cherish the idea and hope that Russia under this liberalizing policy of Stalin and Rykow would evolve to a powerful peasant state perhaps even without any major relapses.

But this decent revisionism aroused a passionate opposition from the orthodox revolutionaries like Sinowjew and Trotsky. Sinowjew predicted that Stalin would discard Lenin and his teachings and replace the genuine orthodox principles of Lenin's Socialism by a falsified one. Sinowjew wanted to return to the War Communism. He wanted an actual dictatorship by the urban proletariat. He wanted to weaken the farmers and their political influence through the policy of price disparity and a high tax levy. As foreign policy he demanded an energetic effort to bring about a world revolution.

Whether Trotsky, the eternal revolutionary, supported Sinowjew merely for tactical reasons or genuinely stay undecided here. It is an historical fact that Sinowjew and Trotsky through their opposition forced Stalin away from his revisionist line of action.

For a while this line was still continued. Those with Sinowjew were told that the endeavored bringing together of proletariat and peasantry is true Leninism, that the State capitalism made possible the maintenance of a proletariat state in the middle of a capitalistic world, and that this was thoroughly in the line of Lenin.

The quarrel among the party groups for the genuine Leninism was decided in favor of the Stalin line. Sinowjew was dismissed from the "Political Bureau," Trotsky was banned at first to Alma Ata in Turkestan and then out of the country.

But now there developed in Stalin's policy a remarkably sudden change! The strife in the party had somewhat shaken his own position. Trotsky drew a lot of sympathy from the country for various reasons. In wide circles they did not believe in his opposition for the sake of radicalism but looked at his politics on other

aims. The Communist Youth was radical anyway. All this forced the responsible party leaders to demonstrate that they had remained true to the original Communistic ideas.

So the third period of the Russian Revolution was inaugurated--the period of radical socialization. The first mentioned decisions and laws were introduced as judicial foundation for this new course. Since Russia is primarily an agricultural state, this policy manifested itself predominately as agricultural communism. The large controversy with the farming class reached the foreground. The Decisive Battle had started!

2. The Mass Flight of the Colonists

The basis for the mass flight of the colonists might lie partially in the fact that they were thrifty, and partially that they were religious. The Soviet State is built on philosophical principles in which atheism is the state religion. It rests on two pillars: The communist party with her socializing program and on the League of the Godless with her materialistic confession. The League of the Godless is the priest and prophet of the atheistic religion which the Communist State has proclaimed as the only permissable religion. The Communist State is an admitted Godless State. It wields the hammer not only against the material, the social-political basis of the previous civilization, but also against her moral-religious basis. Its sickle wants to harvest a new and better civilization of the glorious future, thoroughly deprived of Divine authority and, therefore, genuinely humanistic. We have here the last part of an autonomous, humanistic development, the fulfillment of the tendencies of "Enlightenment" of the 18th and 19th centuries.

One is not concerned alone with an economic and socio-political formula or program. The question, whether the controlled or the free economy or a compromise is right, is a question of utility which somehow must be answered by experts. It is a tragic inheritance of our European history that one confuses this technical problem of economy with that of philosophy or religion. It is extremely regrettable that in Moscow the dullest rationalism has found a fanatical cult, that one sees represented there a theory of sciences which philosophically must be labeled as undeveloped and backward. And whoever is acquainted to some extent with the methods of the Godless propaganda, must be deeply moved by the enormous ignorance in the matter of religious beliefs, the origin and the story of Christianity, supposed that he sees these matters not only with a cool intelligence but with a loving, warm heart for all men. It hurts deeply to see how misunderstanding upon misunderstanding is here accumulated and thus deepens and widens the gulf between the believers and the deniers of God. <u>There is no question and should not be hushed, that here Christianity bears a deep blame</u>. To be true, the manifesto of the religious socialists, signed above all by Leonhard Ragaz, as well as the recently published <u>Book of the Suffering of Russian Christendom</u>, pointed out to this fact. Yet we should not minimize it either. The entire Christendom without distinction of creed is facing judgement today and needs reformation. It cannot say: "Things which occur in the East do not concern us." It cannot content itself with the monopolizing of the martyr idea, relative as it is in any case. Judgement periods should, according to the purpose of God, be reformation periods--times of revival and resurrection. The revolution in Russia with its terrible earthquakes, its shock, its criticism of religion and Christianity, its persecution of religion and Christianity, but also its hard-to-conceal search of genuine religion and vital Christianity is for the Russian Christians and the entire world a call to awaken, to self-examination, repentance, to new prophetic-priestly acts, to new faith and new love. As we have heard this morning, again the church has to bear the cross on her shoulders. It is the church under the cross which we deal with here and not primarily the conditions and persons who constructed this cross. That is the way of God's judgment and thus also his way of judging us.

But Christianity is not identical with a sermon of sentimental love. Love cannot exist without truth, just as truth cannot exist without love. If we were

warn and deeply and seriously protest against a confusion of economy and religion born out of misunderstanding and ignorance, then we believe to act also in the well understood interest of those who do not understand us but harass and despise us. We were poor Christians if we would answer this hate with return hatred. But we would be just as poor Christians if we allowed this hatred to make us deny the truth as the result of fear.

Obviously we are involved here in a terribly tragic conflict together with the entire Russian population, with our colonist brethren and especially with our Russian Mennonite Churches. On the one side are these colonists in their peculiar way of life, with their conception of the family, their sharply expressed urge for independance, their individualism and consciousness of private property which naturally did not dispose them toward communism with its leveling tendencies. But this was not the final problem. The all-knowing Soviet Government will certainly know that the German colonists and especially the Mennonites will not conspire. It is somewhat of a demagogical argument to point to the Selbstschutz (self protection army or Mennonite home guard) of 1918. Then, Trotsky declared that banditry in the Ukraine would be liquidated. That was well-known to the German colonists and played an important part in the formation of the colonist Selbstschutz. This should be stated once for all. The policy of the Red Army toward Machno allowed no doubt in anyone's minds that Moscow thought of this brigand leader as an enemy of the State. It would be inadmissable to question the loyalty of the German colonists with such reminiscences. The fact that the German colonist does not recognize in the agricultural communism his ideal, due to his above demonstrated way of life and his Western European background, should certainly not surprise us. But it must be emphasized that the real problem does not lie at this point at all. A Mennonite farmer once wrote the following note to American relatives: "We did not do anything unlawful to the government, we just did not want to leave our religion and could not leave it. Up to this point we can go along with communism, i.e. to share our small fortune with others and to work together but to become a part of the League of the Godless, that goes beyond our capability--then we must flee if possible." (Mennon. Rundschau, March 19, 1930)

That is stated simply but pertinently; it brings out an age-old Mennonite problem--namely in the problem of freedom of conscience. Protestantism plays a significant role in the development of religious individualism. But above all, it was evangelical Anabaptism which objected to any religious compulsion. The Anabaptists who were persecuted, and for that could easily separate themselves from the state, thought very clearly about the authorities and their limits and about the right of freedom of belief and conscience. Thus they condemned unconditionally any persecution of intolerance. A Turk or a heretic is not overcome with fire or a sword, but with patience and praying. The burning of heretics is of the devil. The state must not become the judge over the human conscience. The Anabaptists also carried through the principle of voluntariness, wherein a deep understanding of the nature of conscientious life is manifested. Mennonites for hundreds of years have struggled for freedom of belief and conscience and have sacrificed much. We must announce here that the Russian Mennonites also will not forfeit their convictions. Rather let them be destroyed! The Soviet Government has the following choice: either destroy them or to return freedom of conscience to them as well as to the other German brethren of evangelical and Catholic faiths. We cannot understand what sort of an interest the state has in unprotected and defenseless people who themselves want to remain faithful to their way to torture them to death with exceptional laws, with economic and political terror, with administrative banishment, and the robbing of freedom. We cannot understand that the Moscow Government sends a whole group of our thoroughly innocent, religious and sociable people into prison or into exile.

The emigration from Russia since 1923 has been carried on through perfectly legal channels. There has not been a single Mennonite brought across the border who did not have the official exit permission. In 1928 we sought the sanction for relief

work and likewise permission for emigration for those who desired to go to their Canadian relatives from the Moscow Government through Prof. Fridtjof Nansen. Both were refused. We wanted to present a third question also to the Soviet Government through Nansen: They should neutralize the schools regarding religious issues. Nansen first wanted to present the two questions and then present the third at an opportune time. The migration agitators do not sit in foreign countries and they are not found in the colonies either, the real migration agitators sit in the Godless Organization, who make victims of faithful people to quench their own fanaticism.

The reason for the mass flight is in the last analysis a religious one. Second, to be true, also an economic one. One fled from economic terror out of home, house and yard in order to seek the most elementary protection by the Central Government. Only a few have stolen across the Chinese or Persian border at night. Naturally we cannot allow these, our brethren, who have given their last, to perish. But our Mennonite Churches are far away from any political conspiracy. One blames us outside of Russia for the mass flight of the farmers. But think only: they destroyed the organization of our Mennonite colonies, the most ruthless demogogic elements were allowed against them, our best leaders were imprisoned or exiled, and above all one has brought the spirit of dissension into the Mennonite villages and that of religious disintegration. Small wonder that a mass flight set in without organization, without agreement, without help from foreign sources, yes even against the direct warning by Mennonites in responsible positions. One looks for the wire pullers behind the scene and denounces completely innocent people as that. It even occurred that a Mennonite preacher who sent a sharp letter to Germany against the Mass flight (which I saw and read with my own eyes), now is languishing in a northern concentration camp as an emigration agitator while his family is banished to another camp somewhere in the North. The man did exactly the opposite to what he is accused of doing. We cannot understand whether that has anything to do with a political program. We do not know whether a talk is possible between us and Moscow. In 1928 through Professor Nansen we asked for such a conference, and more recently through an American representative of the Mennonite Churches, Prof. Bender, as well as through a presentation of the Conference of Canadian Mennonites under the chairman ship of Bishop Toews. We believe we have a right that our request be considered, the request that out of historic justice the Mennonites and the other German colonists should not be subject to all the terror, and that they are given the possibility either to leave Russia or to serve Russia as farmers.

The form of the economy, in which this will be allowed, the colonists will bear. If it is good, it will prove itself. If it is less favorable, the colonists will bear it. But it is unbearable under all circumstances to allow the overthrow of the family and the church life. If Moscow cannot and will not comply with this minimum request, it must declare it openly to the whole world. We must leave the judgement on it to the world conscience. However, we must commend the eternal grace for our brethren as well as the fate of the entire Russian people--the grace which stands over the pursuer and the pursued in love but also in truth and justice.

Now a few words on the result of the mass flight in and outside Russia. The mass flight prompted a horrible economic terror in the German settlements. Stalin's retreat in March 1930 has brought a certain relief to the settlements of German farmers for which we are thankful. But still ten thousands of our Mennonite brethren and non-Mennonite settlers are perishing in misery. How shall they be helped? The question remains before us!

In other countries, above all in Germany, then also in other European countries and in America, the mass flight prompted a large relief work. The German Government, the German people, the German Christians, the German welfare organizations,

international relief agencies, the Mennonite churches of Switzerland, of Alsace Lorraine, of France, of Poland, of Germany, of Holland, of Canada and the United States have helped and cared for, saved and secured new homes for the homeless according to their strength, yes, many times over their strength.

I close this report with sincere thanks to God and to all gracious officers, personnel, organizations, churches who have cooperated so energetically and rich in blessings in this great relief work.

The greatest thanks, however, belong to the all-merciful, helpful, strong God and father our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of the times and who does not allow temptations to overcome our abilities but works so that we win in the end, and that we can bear it.

EMIGRATION TO BRAZIL
by S. H. N. Gorter

That which man at a certain time considers fatal, or at least not desirable, may at a later time seem to have been desirable. Higher and wiser guidance, as we conceived it at that time, had ordained it.

Soon after the arrival of the refugees in Germany when many shook their heads, there was talk about the emigration of a part of them to South America. What would our people do, since most of them came from Siberia, in this tropical or subtropical region and in this Romanic land? Hadn't the failure in Mexico (of which we in Holland have good information), not shown that man should migrate rather to the North, and above all, that emigrating to a land where no Mennonites live, was much too hazardous? Shouldn't one think first of Canada in this migration, or perhaps of the United States? So thought and talked many here in Europe and also on the other side of the ocean. On every occasion it appeared that the migration to completely strange Brazil was a hazardous adventure. But the distress was compelling. Because of various reasons we could no longer delay the transportation of a part of the refugees. After much deliberation, and many conferences and discussions with the consul, Dr. Seelheim, the vote was cast for Southern Brazil, in particular for the region of the Hanseatic Company of Hamburg in the Santa Catherine State near the "New Hamburg" which received the old name "Hammonia!"

In Molln there was a call for volunteers for the first group and on the 16th of January the first group of 38 families (180 persons) began their journey. In the Hapag-Heim at Veddel-Hamburg the German Commissioner, Dr. Stucklen, made a speech in which he made the remark that he would be entirely responsible for the selection of the new settlement. Following this talk the embarkation began on board the "Monte Olivia", and the first migration to Brazil began under the leadership of Heinrich Martins.

The German government extended credit for this voyage as well as for the stay of the first half-year and the Hamburg Red Cross provided for their equipment.

The other groups followed in intervals, until 191 families (849 persons) had arrived in Alto Rio Krauel and thereupon began the building of a new home. On August 10 nineteen more families (67 persons) making up another group sailed and several days later another small group followed. At present nothing certain can be said as to whether this migration to Brazil, just as to Paraguay, is a success or not since we are only human in our observation, but the migration seems to be providential in face of the sudden political change in Canada. We should be particularly thankful.

A world fair in general offers no objective representation of actual facts. The Brazilians had a magnificent palace built this year on the fair grounds in Antwerp which could not convey an accurate idea of what this country had to offer. Yet it made a strong impression on me even though I made a rather critical visit. Brazil seems to be such a large country with its magnificent nature and many possibilities in the sphere of agriculture, industry and also in the higher cultural activities. And, although our Russian brethern and sisters have settled in a most remote part of this country where they would have little or nothing to do with these things--it is yet of importance that they become citizens of such a powerful state. However, at first they had less to do with the Brazilians then with the Germans of whom more than 100,000 lived in this district. A German business company, under the direction of Mr. Mekien and the German Government Commissioner, Dr. Lange, stood by them in their colonizing efforts. The first named gentleman already expressed himself in a personal letter to me, being very thankful for the Mennonites whom because of their high morals, he called the best adjusted colonists who had made themselves at home there. And Heinrich Martins,

the representative of the Mennonites, had soon to give advice to other colonists there.

Our Mennonites have not become strongly unified here. They are, as Martins analyzed, a group that has been thrown together. But out of these differences has unraveled slowly a unity chiefly because all carry the same destiny and at the same time fulfill the same duty, may be a simple duty, but a very difficult one. In the optomistic reports sent in by Martins, one can always read between the lines how many difficulties they have. The virgin forests must be made inhabitable, the ground must be broken, the mighty trees must be felled and roads must be laid out. After a short stay in the barracks, they began to build houses. Meadows and fields here and there must be tilled. And this appears to be progressing because the photographs which Martins sent me are the unquestionable evidences that they are going swiftly ahead. Out of the home of Martins was distributed the provisions, but on the newly tilled land, fertilized from the ashes of the trees, the first fruits is growing and ripening. Our Mennonites as born colonists are kept employed to work for their new existence with the sweat of their brow. God is always with them, as he always is with the courageous and the strong. Another year approximately and the greatest worries will be overcome and one can be sure of a more stable living. Not only Martins himself, the leader, spoke in these hopeful tones. Also a letter from the colonist Bro. Peter Fast, printed in the Herald on July 31, 1930, told of it in a delightful manner, above all about the favorable climate and the beauty of nature.

With certain Lutheran families which migrated with them our people in Alto Rio Krauel settled 32 miles up the river from Hammonia. The colony extended itself after a time. There was no mention of a real village, everyone lived on his own farm. In Hammonia one speaks only of the "Colony". All colonies are near a river containing plenty of fish, each colony 200 yards wide, but of different length. One pays between 10 to 15 dollars per hectar (2.47 acres) which must be paid in 10 years, and a colony is on the average approximately 30 hectars (74 acres). As result one lives far apart, and a conference between the Martins and the most distant colonists, or a ride to receive provisions at the Food Center in the house of the distributor always takes much time.

In the Martins Colony is an open square for the central part of the village which Martins gave the name "Witmarsum" in order to honor Menno Simons. Here a church house, a school, and a hospital will be built, and a further settlement up the river will at the same time provide a second school. For the time being worship services are held in one of the empty barracks, where also school classes were organized. Teachers were found in the group, and various other qualified teachers are on their way to organize the spiritual life. No doubt, these schools will be organized in the old way as in Russia, only with the difference that in place of the Russian language, Portuguese will be taught.

In Martin's interview with a Brazilian Journalist in the port of Rio de Janerio, he explained that the Mennonites hoped to become good citizens of Brazil and that they would strictly observe the laws of the land. But when he was asked whether they would fulfill their military service, he answered that further details must be worked out on this subject. We must use all our power in order to obtain concessions and freedom on this point which we had in old Russia. When in nearly 20 years the generation which will be born in Brazil will be required to perform military service, we must have arrived at the point where alternative service of some type will be available so that our young men can obey the law of God in this respect also. The outlook here is dark just as in the whole world. Yet we hope and trust that the Eternal would also bring his light here in a manner which our eyes are unable to see now.

In closing I would like to say a word about the relationship between the Dutch and the Brazilian Mennonites. This happened quite perchance. Or does one

here also trust in the work of providence? As the two representatives of the Dutch Mennonite Emigration Bureau traveled to Germany during the past winter and visited the Mölln Transit camp, they found that the first groups to go to Brazil were feverishly busy in preparing for the journey. The following day they witnessed the embarkation. All at once it became clear to them for what purpose the money, collected in Holland, should be used. Martins was given a preliminary promise, realized this Spring, whereby every family was given the means to buy a cow. This "Dutch Cow Fund", greeted in Brazil with much gratitude, became very popular in Holland. Aside from that, we were also able to give money for the erection of buildings in Witmarsum and for other instances.

The Mennonites of Holland had established for themselves the goal to support the Mennonites for as much as possible. Just as the North American organization supported the colonizing of Paraguay, so the Dutch want to faithfully support their co-religionists stemming from old Holland now and also in the future, though in a more modest scale. We feel this as a fine opportunity given us by God.

Those here in Holland know that in the middle of the seventeenth century there existed in north Brazil an extensive Dutch Colony which prosperiously expanded and in which Johann Maurits of Nassau had been the governor. This Dutch Colony in Brazil was shortly afterwards lost again. Now a group of people in whom, too, the spirit of Holland lives are searching for a place to live in peace in Brazil. And though many a colonist is aware of his Dutch heritage, we are happy in Holland to be able to extend our hand to this "peaceful penetration".

Experiences in Relief Work
By Emil Handiges

I was happy to receive the invitation to contribute to the general topic "Personal Experiences in Relief Work" this evening since I was allowed to assist our refugees from the inception of the work. "Brethren in Distress", rang the call through Germany in the latter part of November 1929. It was a Saturday evening when I received a long distance call from Berlin from my friend, Prof. Unruh, to come to Berlin in order to take part in some decisive conferences. On the next evening after I reached Berlin, Prof. Unruh, Mr. Paul Von Kügelen and I sat in conference together until midnight. The first principles for the relief work were set up. After midnight Mr. Unruh released the flaming call "In the Center of the Storm" which went to all Mennonite periodicals. Returning to Elbing we organized the German-Russian Refugee Relief group (Deutsch-Russische-Flichtlingshiefe) as one of the first relief organizations. All organizations and charity groups of the city were united under the leadership of the Women's Association of the Red Cross of the City of Elbing. Over 4,700 RM were gathered and 16 large boxes were collected consisting of good clothes, shoes, books, etc. and sent to the refugee centers of Hammerstein, Prenzlau, and Mölln. To give greater publicity, a meeting was called of the Elbing Citizens Club on February 17, 1930, in which nearly 1000 persons participated while more had to return for lack of room. At this meeting the refugee preachers, Elder Johannes Janzen and Nicolai Siemens of Crimea spoke on the subject "What has forced us to flee." I spoke on "Our visit to the refugee camps" to which I will refer again. When the first trainloads of refugees crossed the border, we were already organized. At the same time our steady, calm minister, Heinrich Pauls from Heinrichswalde, was also at his post and had greeted our co-religionists in Eydtkuhrien in the name of our Mennonite churches. With particular faithfulness the Mennonite church at Heubuden-Marienburg took care of the transit refugees. At all midnight trains, the customary refugee transportation, representatives of the Heubuden Mennonite church were at the depot and distributed love gifts and extended to them brotherly greetings. The more spontaneous or local relief organizations followed immediately after the organization of our Relief work of the Conference of the former West Prussian Mennonite Churches.

The committee of the elders summoned the entire teaching staff of the church on Dec. 10, 1929, to Kalthof to an extraordinary meeting on the subject "Brethren in Distress". There the foundations were laid for our cooperative work with the entire German Relief Work. There one of the most important points of our task--the question of spiritual care and personal contacts--was also discussed. Camp visits should be carried on regularly. As the first of our group, following Bro. H. Pauls of Heinrichswalde who had made the beginning, our Bro. Gustav Reimer of Heubuden went to the camp at Prenzlau. Then, the vexing quarantine regulation made all further camp visits impossible. But we had the great joy to have the refugee preachers visit us here in West Prussia and in the free city of Danzig. On our second meeting in Kalthof on February 11, there were three refugee representatives, namely Bro. Johs. Janzen of Turkestan, Nicolai Siemens of Crimea, and Nicolai Siemens of Siberia, at our meeting and presented some very worthwhile reports to us. From then on many brethren and also sisters of our churches and families went in and out. The brethren Janzen, Siemens, Braun, Klassen, Koop, Hubert, Isaak, Boldt, etc, served us with God's word and were a great blessing to us.

Since visitors of our group were always confronted with difficulties, I asked Prof. Unruh, what we should do about it. He wrote me to travel to the camps without too many previous arrangements but simply to go in God's name and the way would open. In accordance with these instructions we quickly made up our mind and by the end of January Bro. Gerhard Fast of Eichwalde, Jacob Friesen of Puppendorf, and I took an 8 day visiting trip that carried us to the camps at Prenzlau, Molln, Uberseeheim Hapag-Hamburg, and Hammerstein. At the same time we also visited the

governmental "Commissiariat for Relief for Germans from Russia" in Berlin where we under the leadership of Mr. Unruh had an interesting conference with the Reichscommissioner Stücklen. This trip through the refugee camps, which Bro. Gerhard Fast reported about in detail at the Kalthofer Session on Feb. 11, and also in the "Mennonite Blattern" No. 3 1930, was one of the most wonderful experiences of our entire term of office. God's Grace and Blessings were so apparent that we could not thank Him enough for them. Everywhere the authorities and leaders met us with great cooperation and through this we were able to establish a close and personal contact. It was a great experience for us to associate with our co-religionists in a brotherly fashion--eye to eye, and heart to heart. We had richly blessed hours of edification with each other, and in Mölln we were allowed to be present and to share in the touching farewell ceremonies of the refugees on their way across the sea. The personal ties established there will remain for a life time.

These visits to the camps were followed by others. Our preacher Göttner of Danzig, H. Wiebe of Thorichthof and Gerhard Thiessen of Grosz-Lichtenau, the Bro. Heinrich Pauls of Heinrichswalde, Heinrich Dau of Barenhof, Otto Bartel of Grunau, Henr. Bartel of Reichfelde and Gustav Andres of Reichfelde served in the camps with God's word and brotherly greetings. Also on the part of the sisters of our congregations visits were made to the camps. Mrs. Handiges of Elbing visited the Hammerstein camp under the auspices of the relief work and gave illustrated lectures on Palestine, and had also the privilege to treat 850 children in Hammerstein with coffee and cookies. All this helped to unite us with our Russian fellow believers and to form a rich blessing.

The question of an eventual emigration of the refugees was placed before us by the Reichs Commissioner for German-Russian Relief. A commission was appointed to investigate this matter. Under the leadership of Prof. Unruh we took up the contact with the government president of West Prussia, Dr. Budding, and the Chief Magistrate of the District, Dr. Ulmer in Marienwerder. We also checked up with several large estates such as the public domain in Stradaunen and Rebel, and an estate in Grosz Bandken. Under the leadership of Director Klassen we visited the large estate Randischken, whose large buildings were very fit for a transition camp. I thanked all the dear brethren who in a selfless manner placed their experiences in the service of this matter. We would have been deeply grateful if we could have found a place for a large share of the Russian Refugees to earn a livlihood in the eastern part of our fatherland. Unfortunately we came to the decision that this idea was impractical. The internal situation in Germany made us turn our eyes across the sea where through God's goodness open doors appeared; particularly in Paraguay and Brazil. The first news of this made the new settlers quite happy and they took on courage. We wanted to help further to work with them in order to stem their distress.

The most pressing worry that bothered us, is the fate of our co-religionists who were sent to Northern Siberia and banned into the most terrible enslavement. The distress of these brethren and sisters cries to heaven. All relief efforts have thus far been shattered. We want to keep on beseeching the Heavenly Father "Oh, that Relief from Zion might come and the Lord might free his enslaved people!" Then will our faces carry smiles and our mouths will be full of praise. Then men will say among the people: The Lord has done a great deed! And out of the tears will come richly earned joy. God grant it!

Relief Work of the Mission Society
LIGHT IN THE EAST (Licht im Osten)
by Jacob Kroeker

The missionary society named Light in the East is not a Mennonite project alone but a work supported by different churches, congregations, and communities both in Germany and abroad. In Germany it was mainly the different territorial state churches which strongly supported the Mission Society. This was not only revealed when the co-religionists were supported within the evangelical revival movement, among the Russian people, but also in the distress of our co-religionists who found themselves in refugee camps or were sent to Siberia and other places of exile. As difficult as the general economical outlook in Germany is, never in the course of the last ten years have we received so much money as free gifts for distribution in the mission society, Light in the East, than this year.

Especially successful were also the collections of clothing, etc. for the refugee camps in Hammerstein, Prenzlau, and Molln. In Reutlingen for example, after a meeting, a whole carload of clothing and similar new materials were sent to the Red Cross and the camp administration. Similar shipments followed from Dusseldorf and other places.

In Russia the work of the mission society, Light in the East, could be extended only to the support of the heavily suffering and exiled ones. In this year it was possible to send such large funds to Russia as never before in any other year. The leadership of the mission society does not know any case where the gifts did not reach the needy. In view of the large needs and the ten thousands suffering our help was but a trifle, yet for many even a little bit of assistance was a strong help and encouragement.

The mission society wants to stress at this Mennonite World Relief Conference how much also other churches, congregations, and home mission societies shared actively and with self sacrifice in the relief work for the refugees in the camps and the co-religionists from Russia. There the gifts were not distributed one-sided, but without discrimination as to the differences in belief, and where the need was the greatest.

The Mennonite Relief Organization
CHRISTIAN DUTY (Christenpflicht)
by Michael Horsch

I am happy to say something this evening on the Mennonite Relief work, Christian Duty (Mennonitische Hilfswerk Christenpflicht), especially since the congregations in West Prussia have shared so actively in this work.

This relief work is only a small affair in comparison to the large and mighty undertaking and services rendered to our co-religionists in all countries which made it possible to settle more than 25,000 Mennonites in Canada and South America. But the relief work of Christiand Duty is of different nature over against the large relief works for the co-religionists. It concerns itself with those among our German folk who suffered need as results of the war. Not only the bodily needs were met but we have also sought to bring a beam of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts and houses of the poor and needy, together with material aid.

This relief action was suggested by the American Old Mennonites. They have given a total of $44,129.89. The center in Newton, Kansas spent $8473.90 and various co-religionists in America gave $6,707.67. From Germany came $2,161.70, Switzerland gave $232.80, Alsace and France $269.20. Altogether we received $61, 975.05.

All these gifts were gathered at a time when in Germany one could buy a large amount of living provisions with one dollar. Because of this situation it was possible to support 12,000 needy in the poorest section of Germany, namely the Erzgebirge region, and at the same time around 3,000 needy in the cities of Munich, Nurnberg, Augsburg, and Wurzburg.

The poorest part of the Erzgebirge section was at that time around the two counties Annaberg and Schwarzenberg. Here lived approximately 12,000 people who were not in a position to provide themselves with the necessities of life, and, because of under-nourishment, faced gradual deterioration of their physical strength. First the number of the poorest in each political districtwas found out, then it became our duty to sift the poorest from the rest in the most equitable way. To solve this there was established a "Commission for Mennonite Relief" (just as in the previously mentioned cities in South Germany) with two officers in every political unit. This Commission was made up of: a member of the poor, the welfare officer, the existing churches (Luthren, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic) spread all over the Erzgebirge, the women's relief societies, the free and the Christian trade unions. This commission met together and nominated the names of the ones to be supported first (in accordance with the number set up by the Board of Directors) without regard for religious creed or political affiliation. Later there was a meeting each month of the commission in order to continually correct the list of names of the ones supported according to the circumstances of the families and single persons. The weekly quantity of provisions per person was always established through us in advance.

Bro. Harold S. Bender from America took part in some of these meetings of the "Mennonite Commission" at various places in South Germany and in the Erzgebirge.

The distribution took place through the administrative and civic authorities, while all expenses were cleared by the community chests. As a result, the administration of the Christian Duty cost on the average only 1.5% of the contributions.

In addition to food provisions we were allowed also to distribute large amounts of clothes and shoes, worn and new, which were sent from America.

With every food packet or clothes gift a tract was given in their hands; "For All" by Rev. Ernst Lohmann, or "Testimony" by Viebahn, in order to point the people up to the real giver of all good gifts, and to bring God's Word and Gospel into the homes.

The population of the Erzgebirge region is very frugal and easily satisfied, the people are accustomed to hardships from early years. Therefore the ones aided were always very thankful. Again and again they spoke in amazement of the Mennonites in America and Germany who were total strangers to them, yet cared for them and thought of them. Then we could always tell them that the giver was compelled to give through the love of Christ and the gift is to be a witness that Jesus lives. In this we were supported by various believing ministers, who belonged to the state church, or the Methodist and Baptist churches. In Munich we had two sisters placed for this service. In Nurnburg and Augsburg, the Deaconess organization of Augsburg and Hensoltshohe placed some of their sisters for this work of distributing goods and they did a very good service, willingly and without compensation. --In Wierzbur there was the elder of the church, Bro. Johann Hege and his family who looked after this service of love.

The cooperation between the authorities, religious and political agencies, was always good, thank God. At that time the political and religious periodicals in Erzgebirge had published articles on the "Mennonites" and their work which were more or less pertinent. In explanation I sent the publication from the South German Conference "Who are the Mennonites" to the political and church authorities and the clergy.

When on my first visit to the Erzgebirge I presented our plan to the Mayor of the town Annaberg. He said: "Why do you not differentiate between the religious and political affiliations?" I answered: "Because we have a Christian love for our neighbor, and every man is taken as our neighbor. We want to help all who suffer." He then questioned, "Have you actually no special purpose for your relief?" --I said: "No!" Thereon he answered: "Don't take me wrong:--I don't believe it;--There are no such unselfish people. In Erzgebirge the Lutherans, Methodist, Baptist and Catholics support many poor but each church group looks after their own people, or after such who are to become theirs, and by each material aid they seek to strengthen their own group. We will also witness the addition of a Mennonite church to the churches and congregations that we already have in the Erzgebirge." The Mayor did not allow himself to change his mind at this conference. But soon by experience he became convinced and became one of the best friends and promotors of our relief work.

During the rationing of food in the post-war years there existed in Germany great scarcity and even distress in many regions, but in the Erzgebirge region as a result of dense population and limited fertility of the soil and the unfavorable employment possibilities, the need was the greatest. We could observe that through our help many a tear was dried and many a pressing need was relieved and that the people through our support were actually helped. Sincere thanks were again and again given to us and many wishes of blessings were given us to forward to the giver. Also in this assembly I am allowed to pass on many words of thanks and hearty greetings to many brothers and sisters and representatives of churches who are present, for we have received nearly $300 from West Prussia and that was at that time a fortune! May God our Lord allow these blessings yet to be fulfilled.

In looking back at the work of that time we should in humility and thankfulness bow before God our Lord who touched the hand of many brethren and sisters of various lands and made them able and willing to help the poorest, whom our Lord Jesus Christ names as his closest brother. But we, especially those of us who distributed the gifts, see so many mistakes and shortcomings in our work that we can only say that we are unprofitable servants and we have seldom done that which we owed others to do.

Now a word in reference to general observations. I considered the arrival of the first Mennonite refugees from Russia for nearly 10 years as the first warning signal, and the flight to Germany in the last year (1929) as the second signal to the German Mennonites. The German Mennonites have yet another obligation, greater than the former ones, to the suffering co-religionists and also to the German people among whom they were scattered in accordance with God's will. May the Lord find us ready and at his disposal.

Final Address
by Benjamin H. Unruh

In the year 1928 I received an order from the chairman of the "Canadian Mennonite Board" to go to Geneva to investigate the situation, and to see if something could be done for our brethren in Russia in their difficult affliction. From the outset we thought of cooperating with Dr. Nansen whose influence was quite strong in Soviet Russia. I corresponded with him and discussed with him thoroughly the whole situation and then asked him whether he would not be willing and able to use his good influence in Moscow on behalf of the German colonists and especially the Mennonites. To his interested question as to what we had in mind, I answered that we had three concerns:

A. We knew that in various settlements a bad harvest and a heavy tax resulted in a threatened food shortage for the winter. We are ready to join again in a large combined relief project in these needy districts perhaps together with the Lutherans and Catholics. It would depend entirely upon getting the acceptance of the plan by the Moscow Government.

We expect that the threatening food crisis will result in a panic in the respective districts which to suppress must also be in the interest to the Soviet Government.

B. A large group of colonist families of all creeds wishes to leave Russia because they could not earn a living there anymore and because their relatives overseas have invited them. The Moscow Government had in 1923-25 allowed such emigrations and even reduced the fares and passport dues. Such a normal migration had a remarkably relieving result, and checked a panic like flight as had occurred in 1922 to Batum. We could not see anything subversive in such a migration. Because of this fact we have since 1921 negotiated with the Soviet authorities openly and with absolute loyalty. The question now is whether the Moscow government will come back to their earlier benevolent attitude towards the migration.

C. I pointed out very stronglythat the most important motive for migration was not an economic but a religious one. The entire situation would be relieved if the colonist schools could be neutralized in religious questions. I knew very well that such a solution would infringe upon the Communist political philosophy but I know of no other way to quiet the migration panic.

Dr. Nansen declared that he was basically ready to mention the first 2 points in a letter to Litvinoff. Whether he could find an opportune occasion to touch upon the third point would be dependent upon the answer of the Soviet Foreign Commissar. I was to write Dr. Nansen again about the whole matter from Germany. This I did after discussing the problem with my friends in Berlin and especially with Mr. P. S. von Kugelgen, the chairman of the Committee of the East Colonists and the Baltics. Dr. Nansen then wrote to Mr. Litvinoff in the aforementioned sense, and received from him a sharp reply. A foreign relief agency was not needed and an emigration was not forbidden. The Moscow Government recognized it her duty to protect Soviet citizens from exploitation through foreign steamship companies.

Thus, the whole action toward a relief work in Russia (Nansen Family Relief) and the emigration from Russia lapsed without result. There was no other way out, than a mass flight. I have uncovered the background of this mass flight in another discourse.

This summer we were facing the ever-increasing difficult situation of the colonists in the east and with it the question whether we should not again approach

the Soviet Government. Nansen had died. His great influence could not be utilized anymore. Then we decided on a direct presentation in Moscow. At the commission of the Mennonite Central Committee, the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Alg. Com. V. B. N. the presentation was outlined by Prof. Bender and I together with Pastor Gorter, and then endorsed by H. S. Bender who was authorized by Bro. Gorter and me.

This presentation, which was written in English, gave an introduction to the cultural contributions of the Mennonites and the other colonists in the development of the Russian agriculture and also mentioned especially the large amount of relief work of the Mennonites of the world and of the Soviet Union carried out loyally to the end under the leadership of Prof. A. J. Miller. The presentation asked further for the possibility of negotiations in Moscow where an American and Dutch Representative would be willing to come. Without anticipating in detail the subject of the negotiations, the presentation nevertheless presented the main points of the suggested discussion. We asked whether it might not be possible for the exiled farmers to return to their village homes so that they could show their usefulness as skilled farmers. If this would not be possible, one could consider these from the standpoint of the Soviet Government, undesirable families and allow them to emigrate. The presentation also touched on the questions of the intentional neutralizing of the schools in the above mentioned instance.

The Foreign Commissar Litvinof answered immediately that his Commissariate was not responsible for the question. Thereupon, we were agreed with Bro. Bender to send a copy of the presentation to Mr. Kalinin with an accompanying letter. Out of Canada, as I mentioned in my main talk, the Conference of Mennonites of Central Canada under the chairmanship of Elder Toews already had sent a similar letter to Kalinin at the advice of C. F. Klassen. In this last presentation it was suggested to carry on negotiations in Berlin with the Soviet Ambassador and asked for an appointment for a conference with the Ambassador.

Nothing to date has been heard of either presentation even though the first presentation openly stated that this World Relief Conference would take place.

We are sticking with our question as an unsolved and probably unsolveable problems. And yet we do not dare to put our hands in our lap. We must concern ourselves further. The conference in Berlin on Sept. 4, 1930, which was arranged by the V. D. A., can probably carry us a step forward. It is particularly Dr. Otto Auhagen whose name has a favorable sound in our circles who concerned himself energetically with the welfare of the colonists. He thinks that nearly 50, 000 German colonists are imprisoned, exiled, or in flight. Russia is largely responsible for a large share of the extremely horrible and inhuman circumstances in the concentration camps resulting in death of the imprisoned ones. Approximately 30,000 German colonists should be saved. Mr. Auhagen suggests that one should approach the Soviet Government on behalf of their emigration from Russia and should place them temporarily in east Germany as day laborers, until at least a part of those unfortunates can be sent to Canada and South American with the help of relatives and religious organizations. That is a question for Mennonites who have good connections overseas. The rest of the refugees will stay in Germany and probably be able to become economically self supporting.

We are counting on approximately 10,000 exiled, fleeing and imprisoned Mennonites. To bring them out of Russia and settle them in North and South America we will need somewhat around ten million mark. The question remains if and how will we handle this matter.

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